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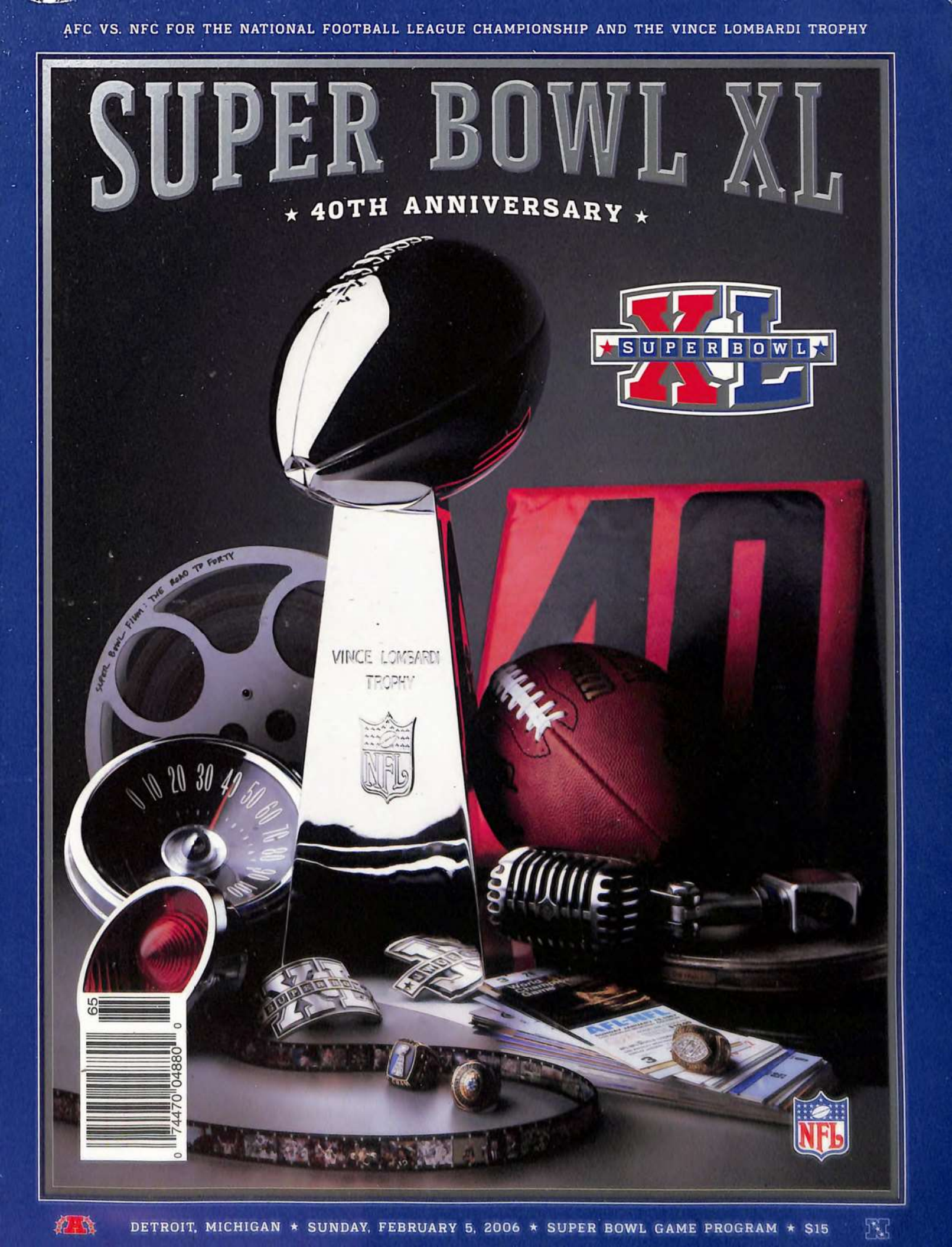

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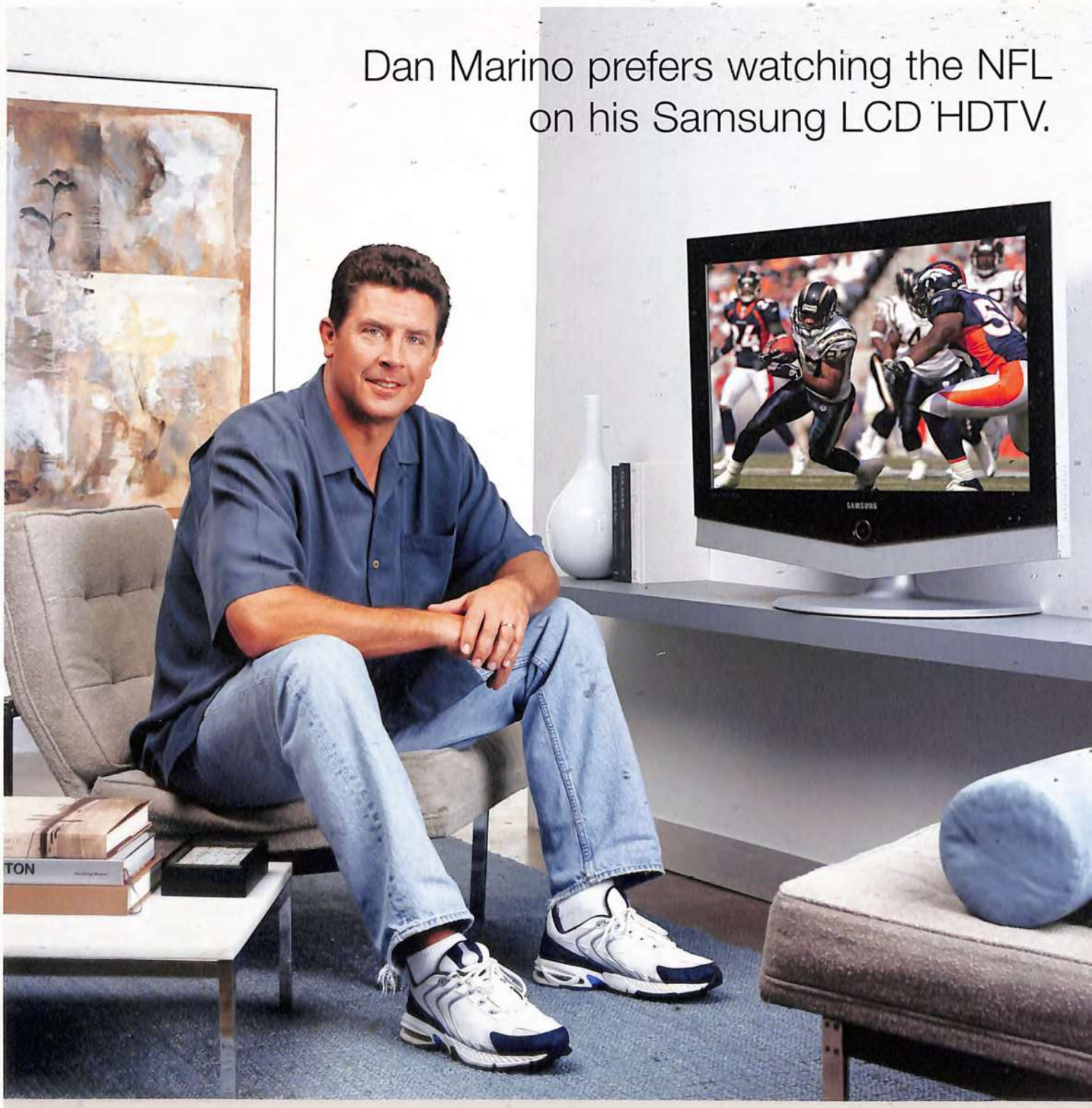

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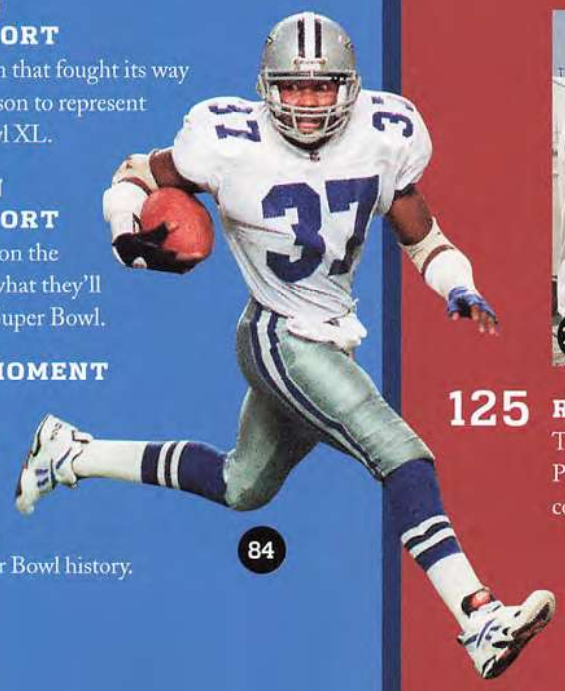

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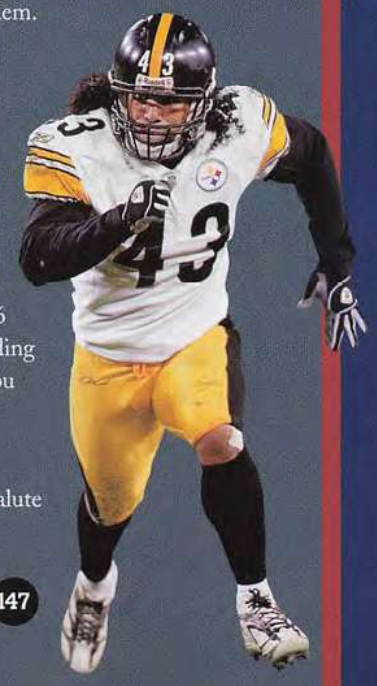

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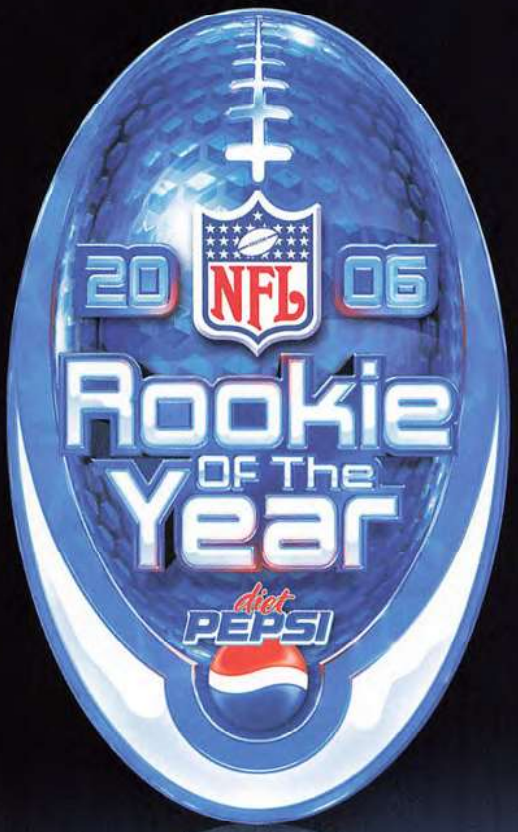

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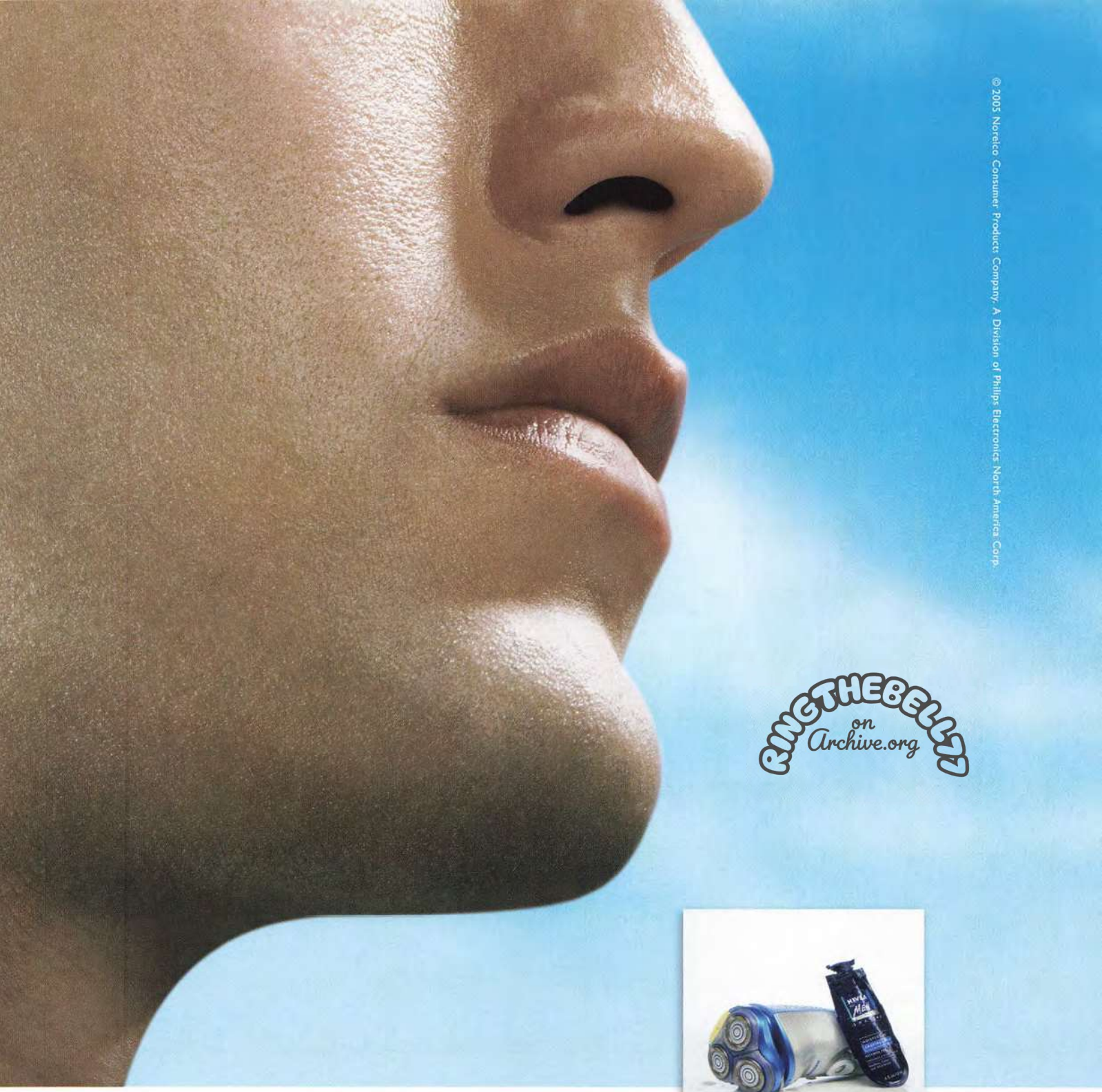

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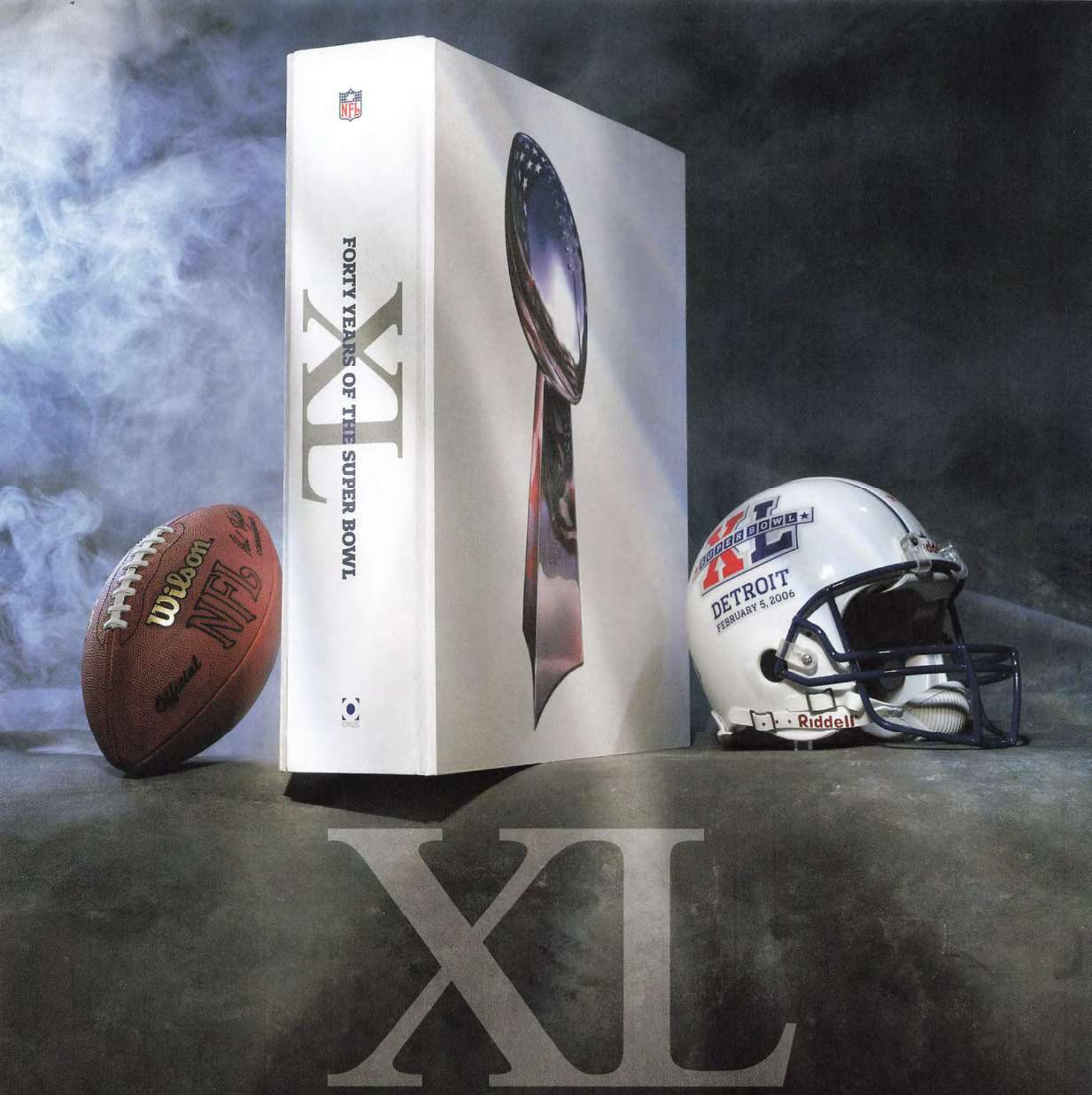

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FROM THE COMMISSIONER

For those who watched the first AFL-NFL Championship Game on January 15, 1967, when the NFL's Green Bay Packers defeated the AFL's Kansas City Chiefs in the Los Angeles Coliseum, you probably had no idea what was in store for this annual title game over the next 40 years. No one did.

As we know now, the game evolved into the unofficial American holiday known as the Super Bowl, and it is fitting that we gather in Detroit this year for the 40th anniversary of this great event.

The Super Bowl XL theme—Celebrating Tradition: The Road to Forty—is something we have been honoring all season long. It began in Los Angeles and New England with our NFL Kickoff event and culminates in Detroit—a city steeped in NFL tradition but also representative of the NFL's dynamic present and future.

This mix of tradition and change is deeply rooted in Detroit's history—from its renowned automotive and storied musical heritage to Ford Field, one of the league's shining new football stadiums. The values that mean so much to the people of Detroit—competition, performance, teamwork, innovation, and diversity—are the same values we embrace in the National Football League.

The 2005 season produced striking examples of tradition and change. From the continued success of Pro Bowl veterans such as Peyton Manning and Michael Strahan to the emergence of new stars such as Carson Palmer and Chicago's new "Monsters of the Midway," competition in the NFL has never been more exciting.

It also was a momentous season from an international perspective. In the NFL's first regular-season game outside the United States, the Arizona Cardinals and San Francisco 49ers played in front of 100,000 fans in Mexico's Azteca Stadium in October. Our NFL Europe League, centered in Germany, is growing, and begins its 14th season in March. This globalization will be evident during Super Bowl week, with news media from all over the world and many activities taking place in Detroit's Canadian neighbor, Windsor, Ontario.

But while the NFL community grows, it also continues to come together in a profound way. This was evident again in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina—from the unprecedented efforts of the New Orleans Saints, to the successful NFL-ABC Katrina Relief Telethon in September and the outpouring of support for the Gulf Coast region from fans everywhere.

As we celebrate the Road to Forty and anticipate the next 40 years of Super Bowl memories, we take this time to salute the best athletes in all of sports; to recognize the good work that all of our clubs have done—both on and off the field; and to thank you, the fans, for making the Super Bowl and the NFL number one in sports!

With special thanks to William Clay Ford, the entire Ford family, and the Lions organization, we are proud to welcome you to Detroit for Super Bowl XL.

Paul Tagliabue

PAUL TAGLIABUE
NFL COMMISSIONER

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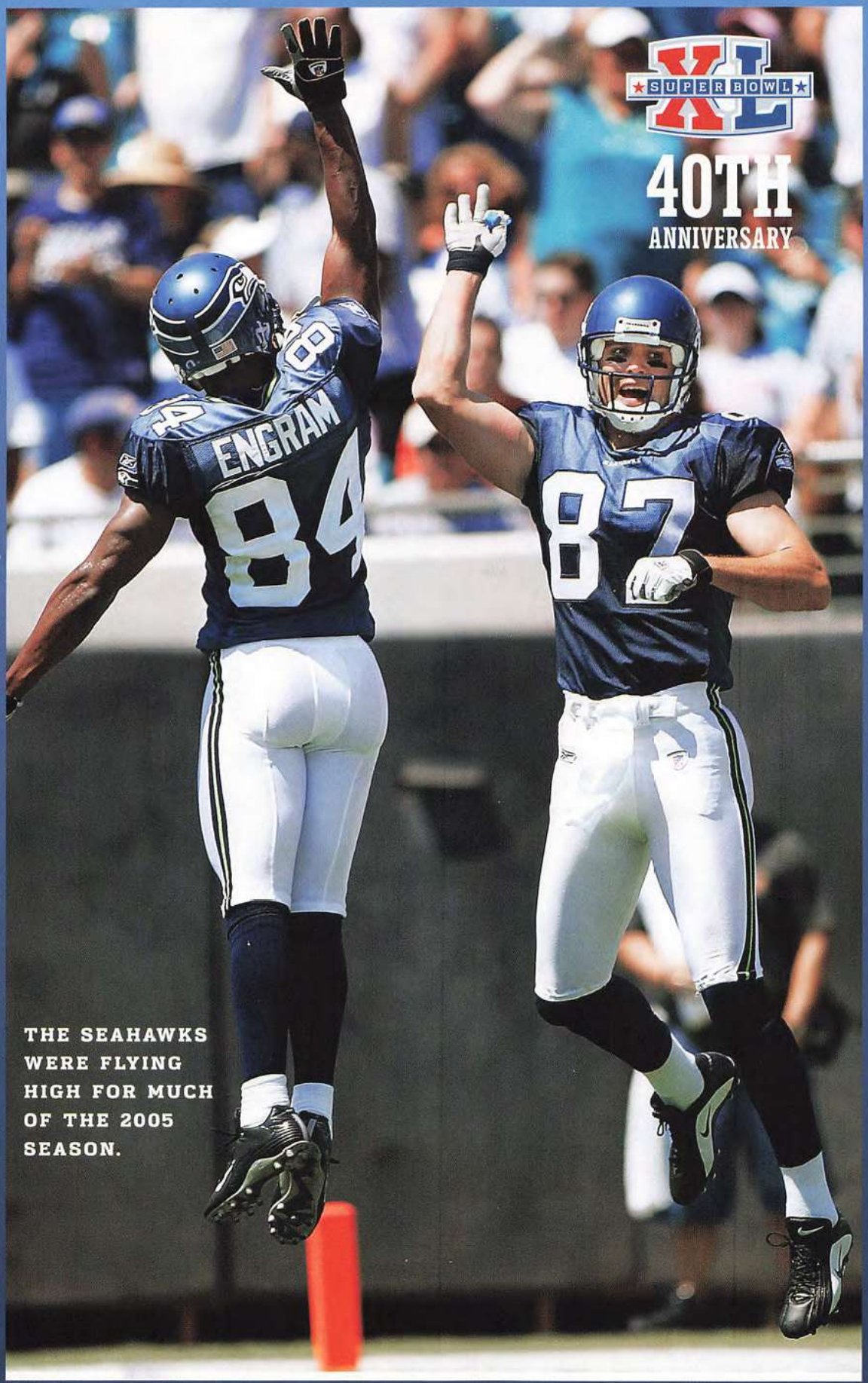

THE SEAHAWKS WERE FLYING HIGH FOR MUCH OF THE 2005 SEASON.

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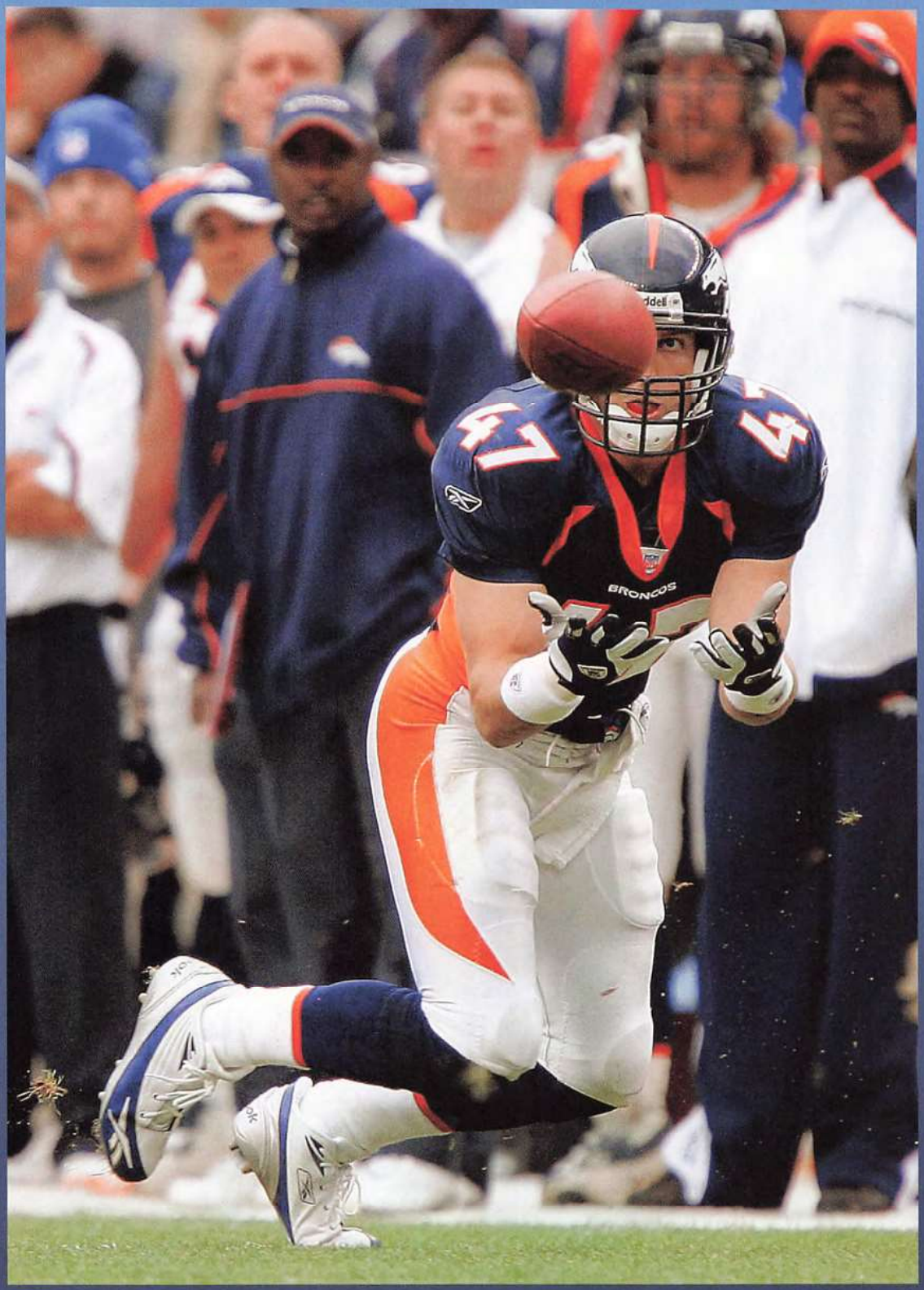

THE BRONCOS' JOHN LYNCH EYES UP ANOTHER INTERCEPTION.

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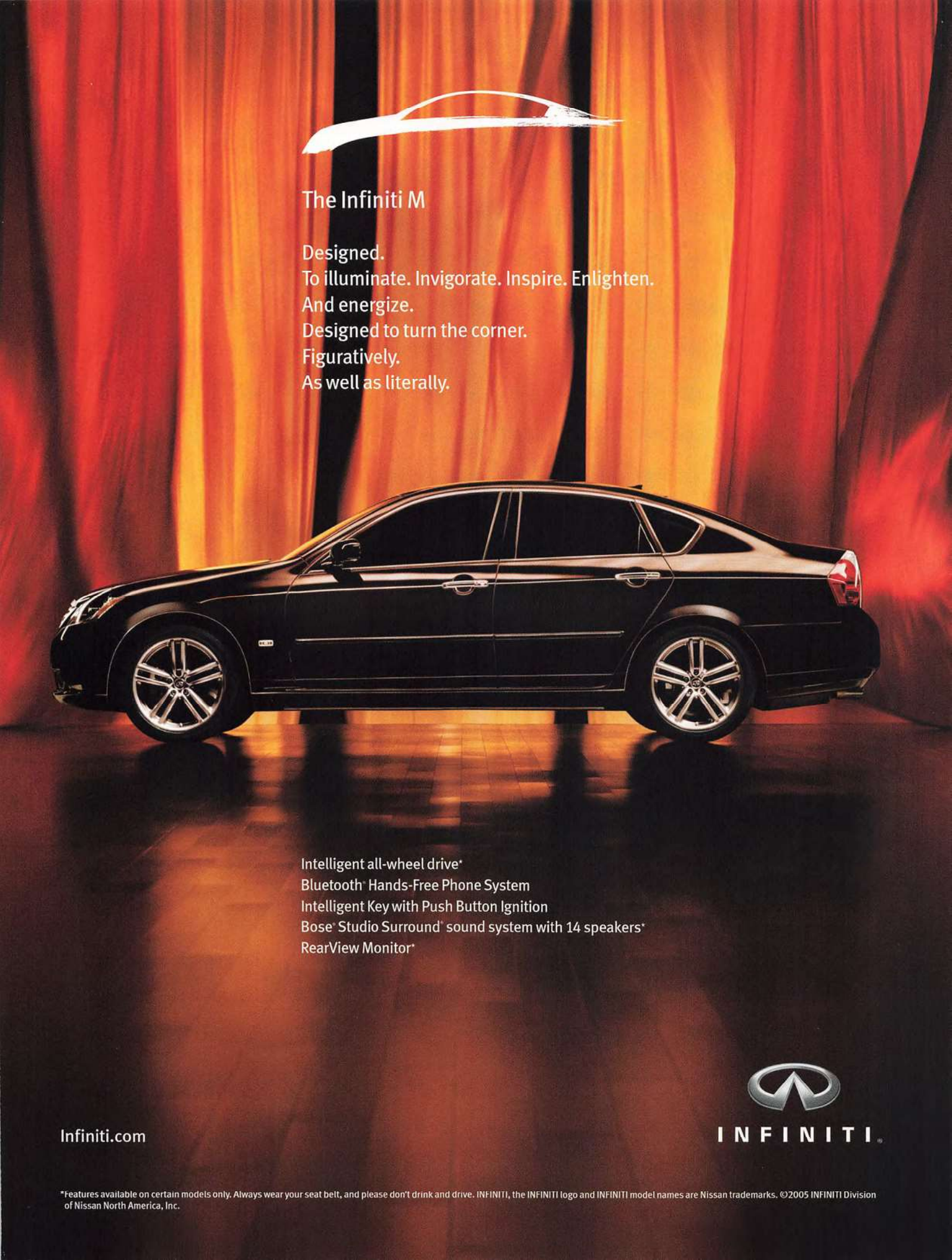

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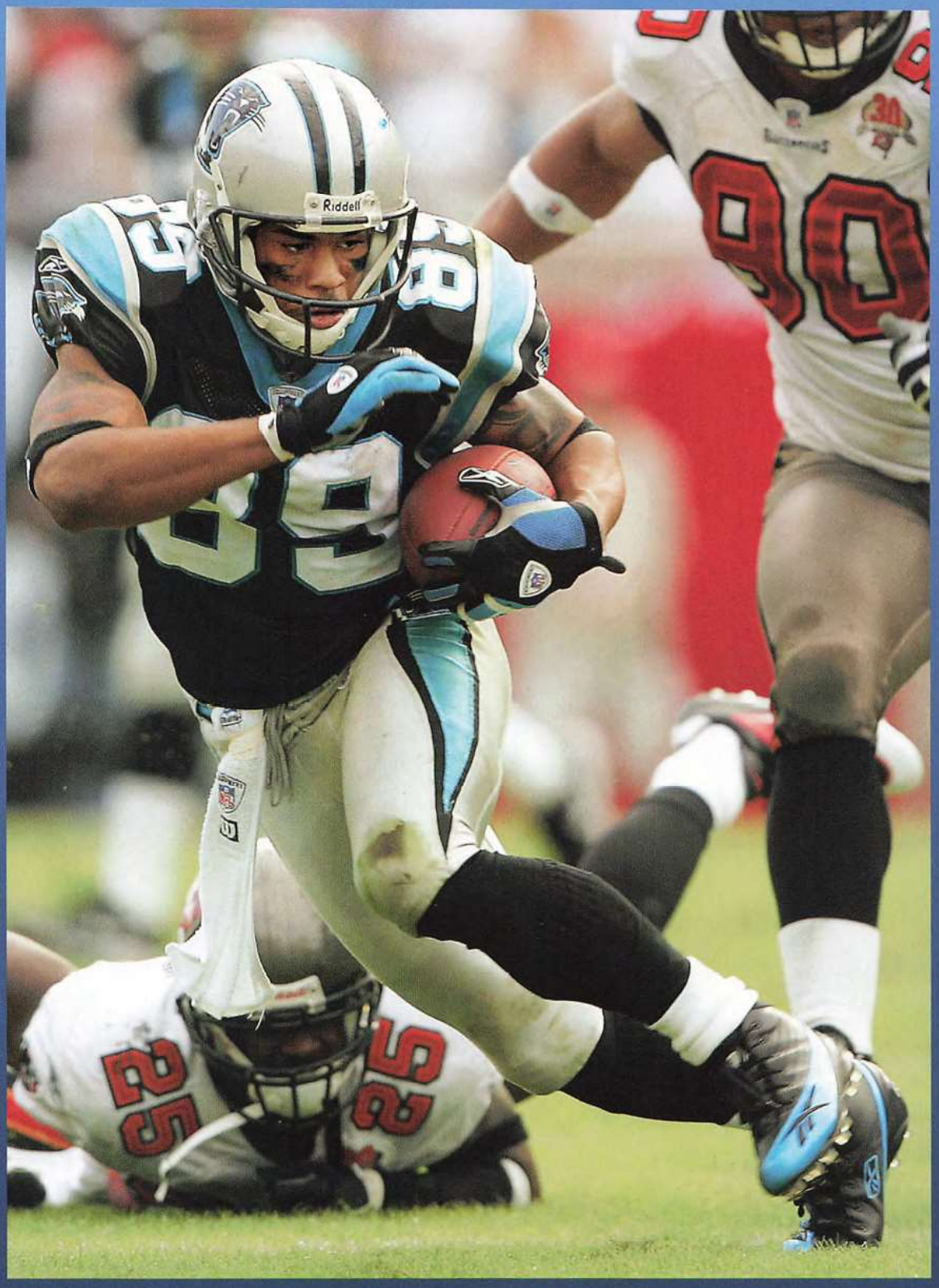

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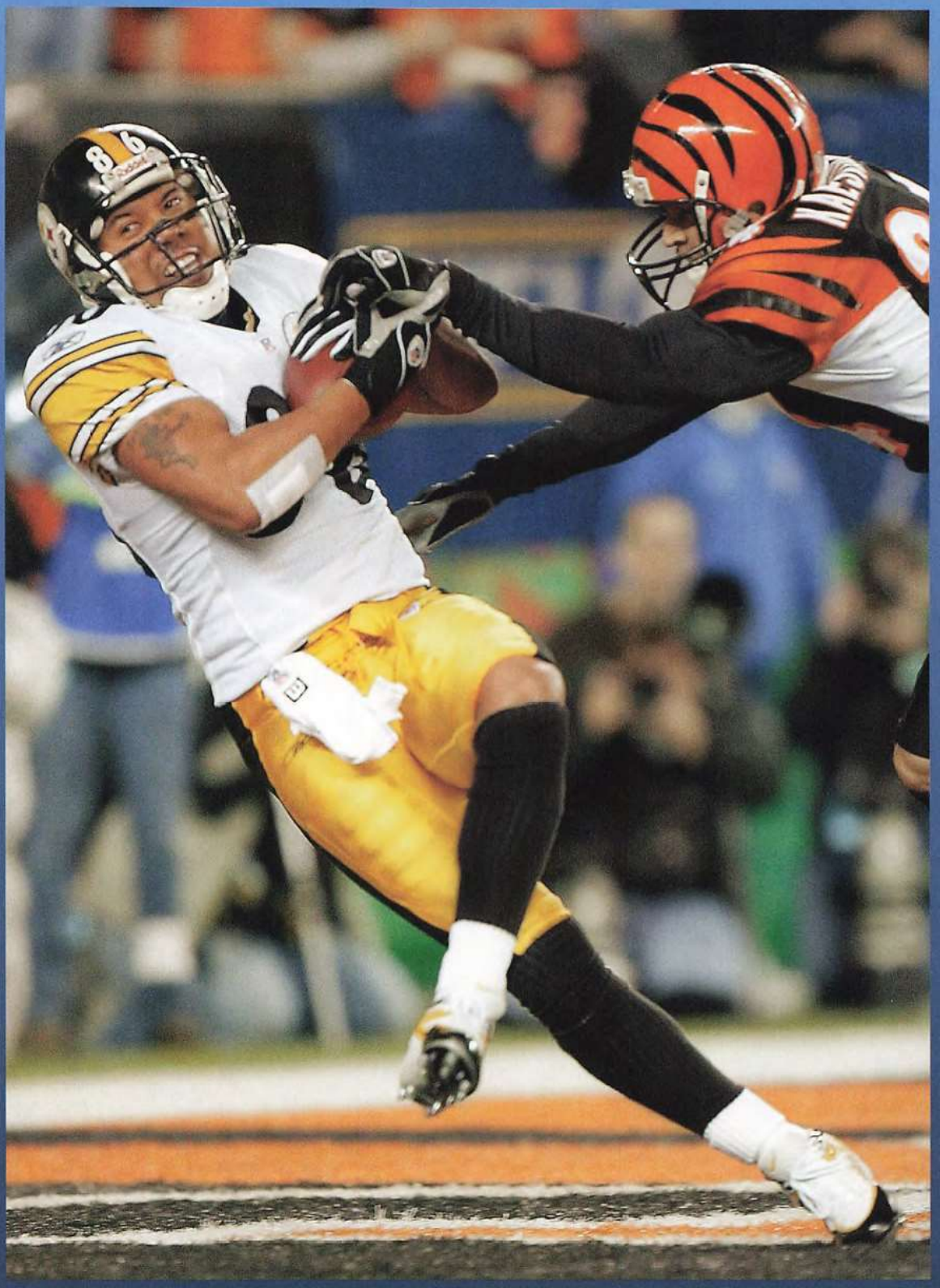

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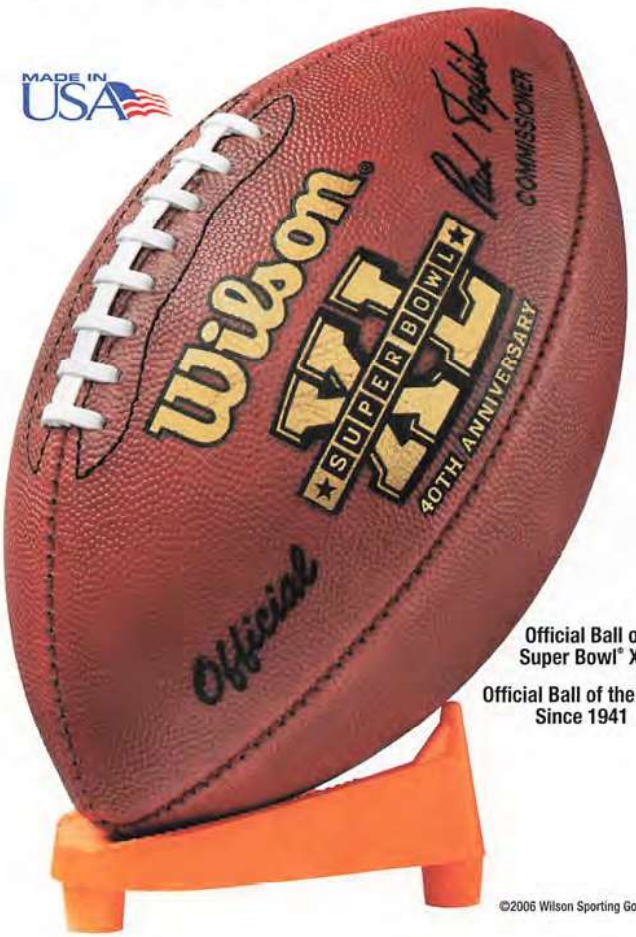

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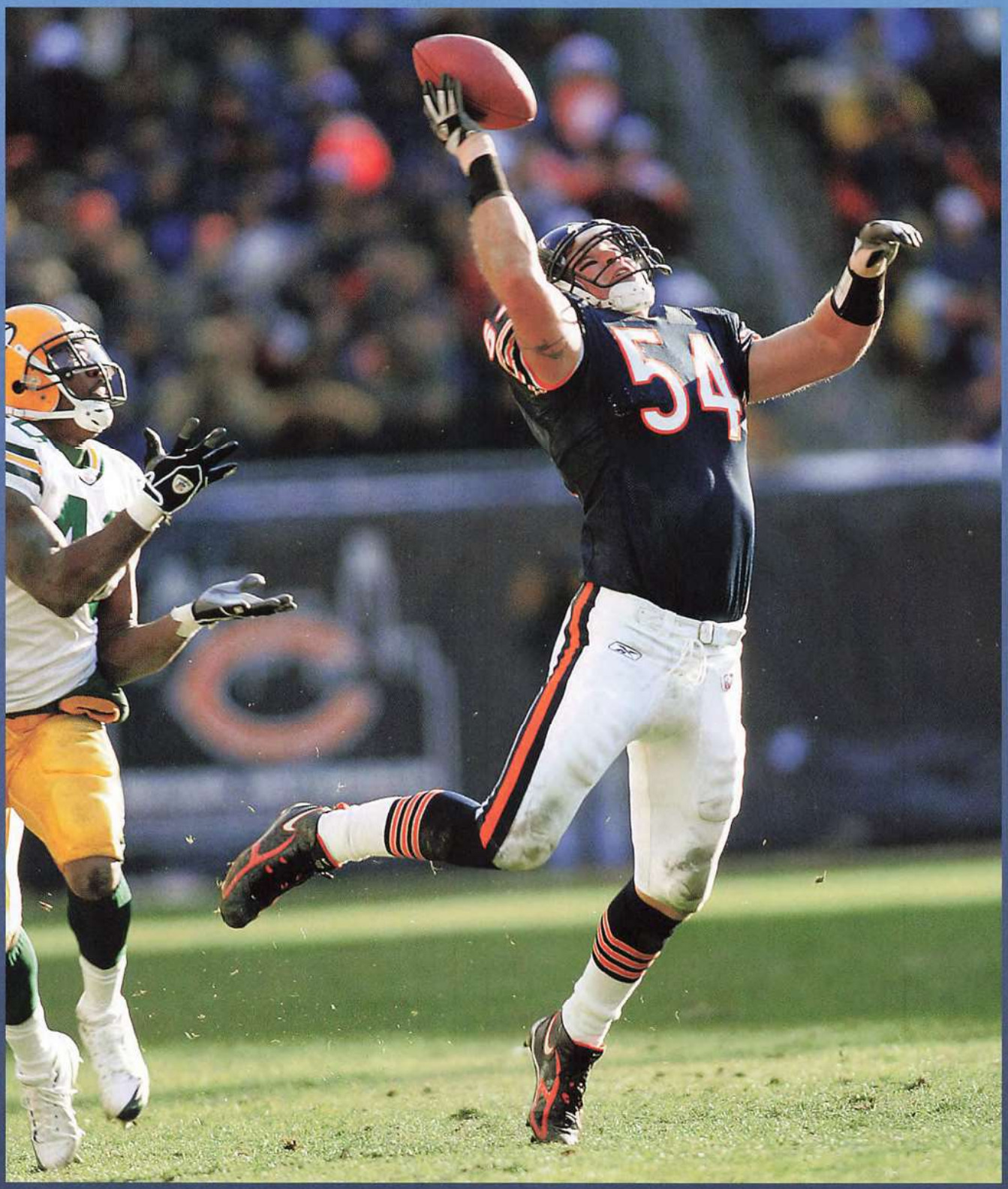

BRIAN URLACHER TIPPED THE NFC NORTH'S BALANCE OF POWER TO CHICAGO.

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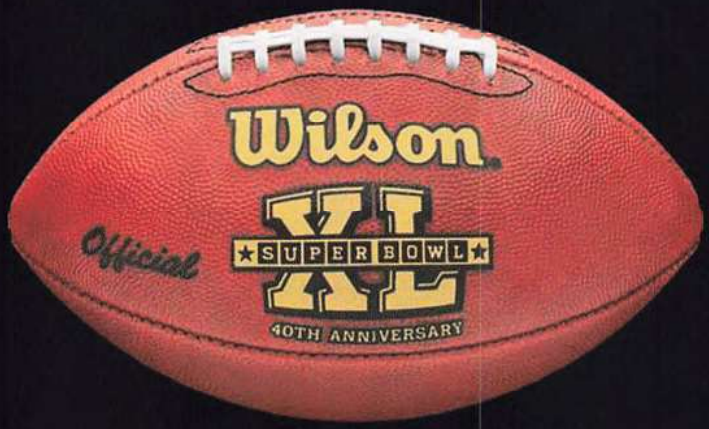

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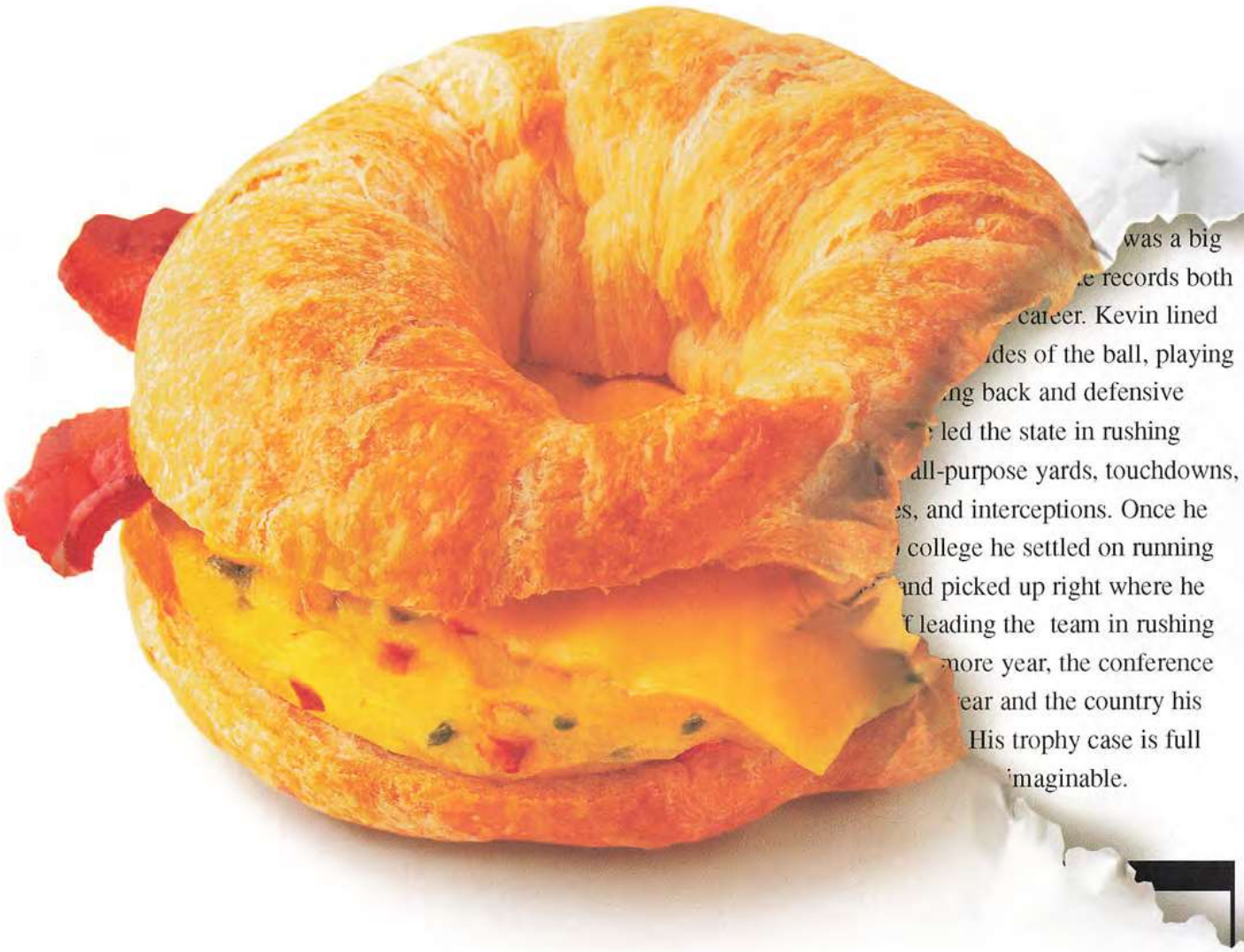
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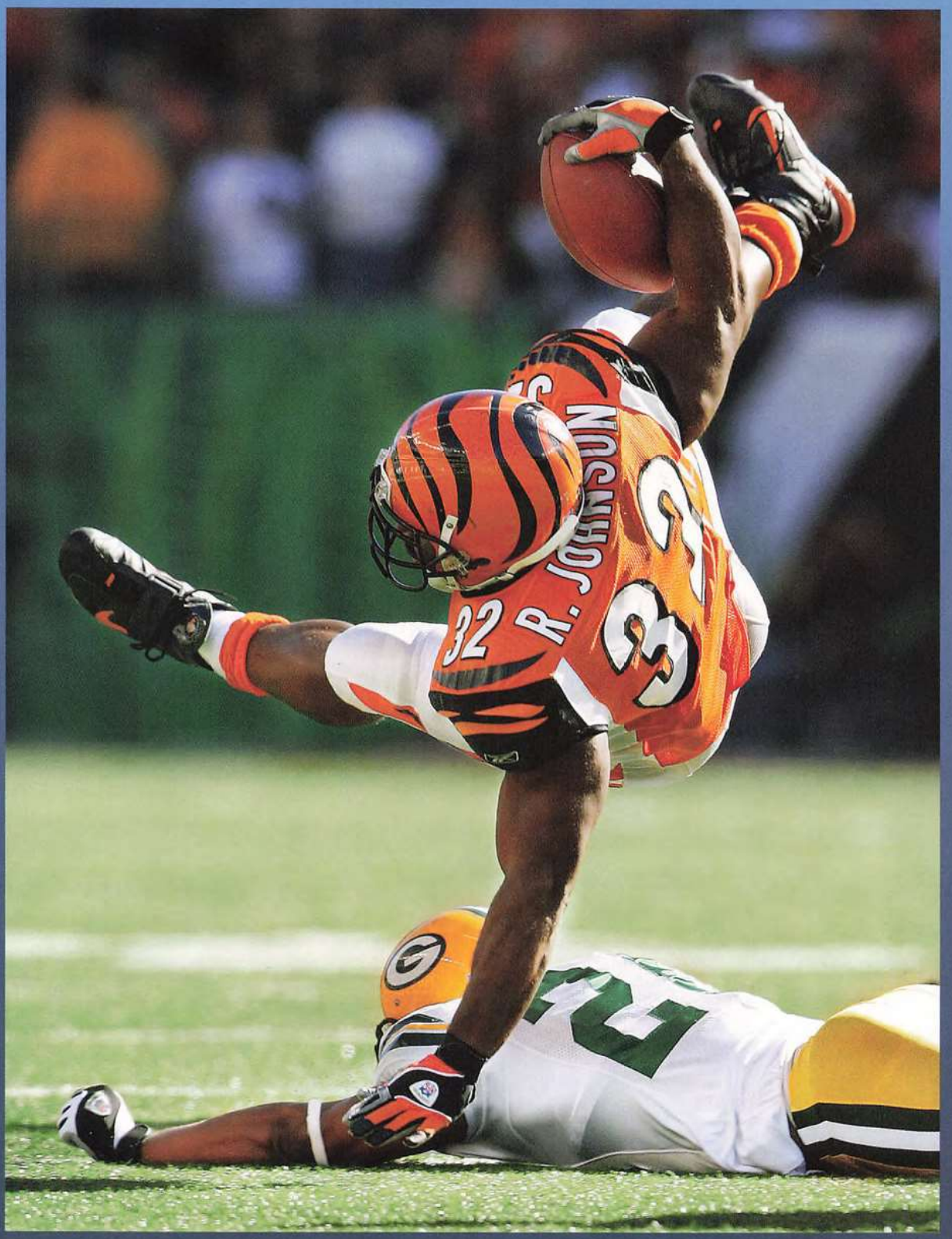

QUICK AS A CAT, THE BENGALS' RUDI JOHNSON POUNCES AHEAD.

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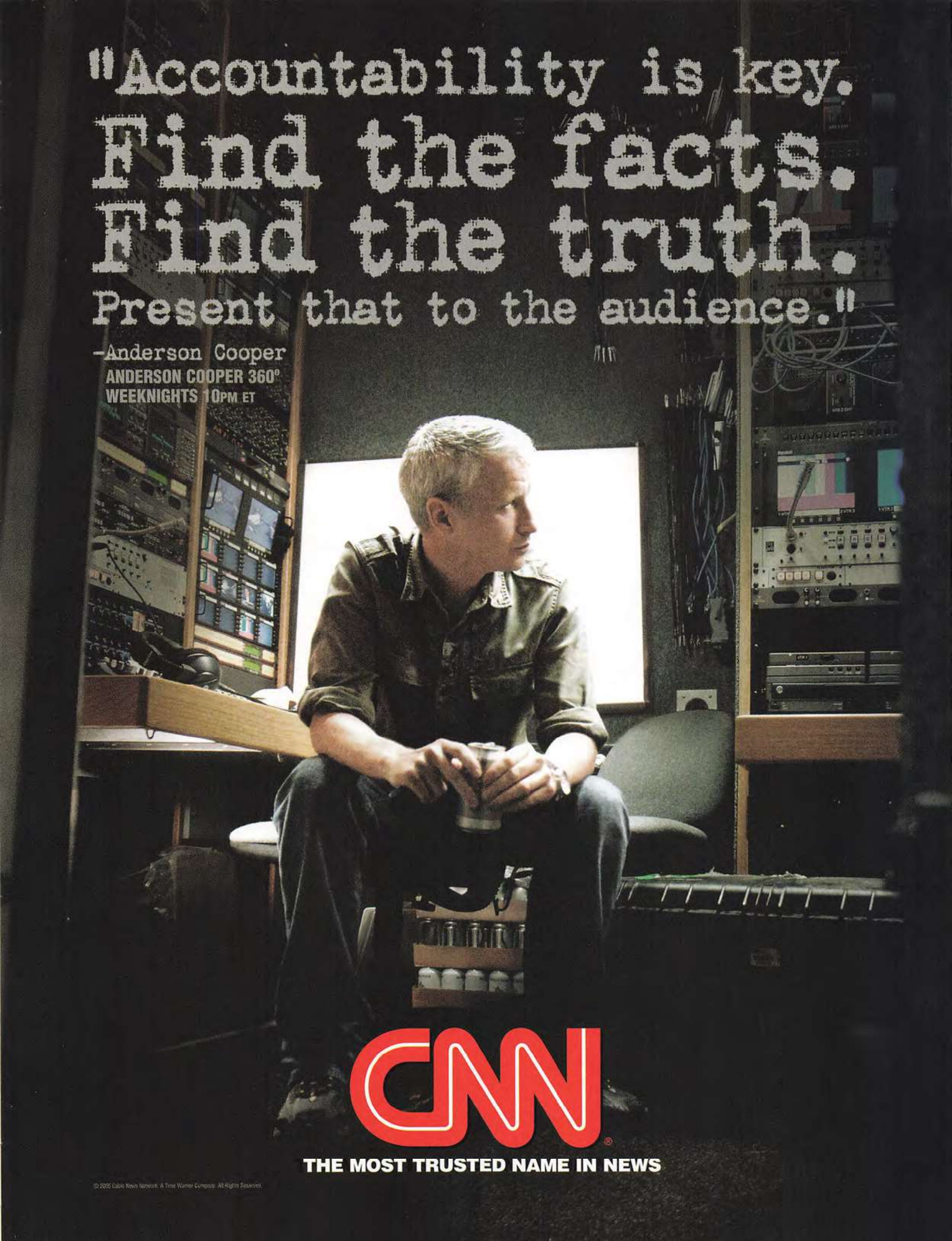

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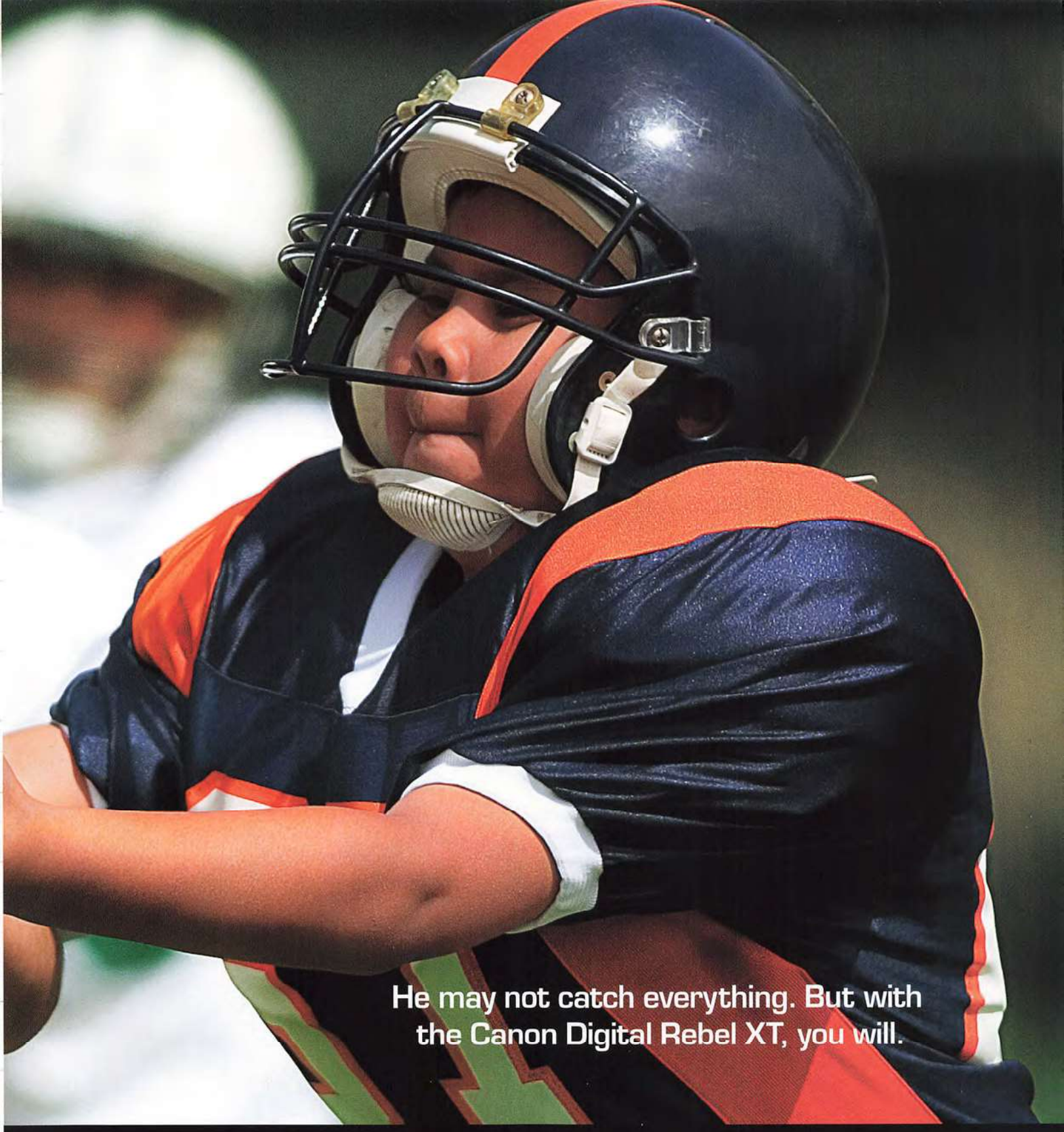

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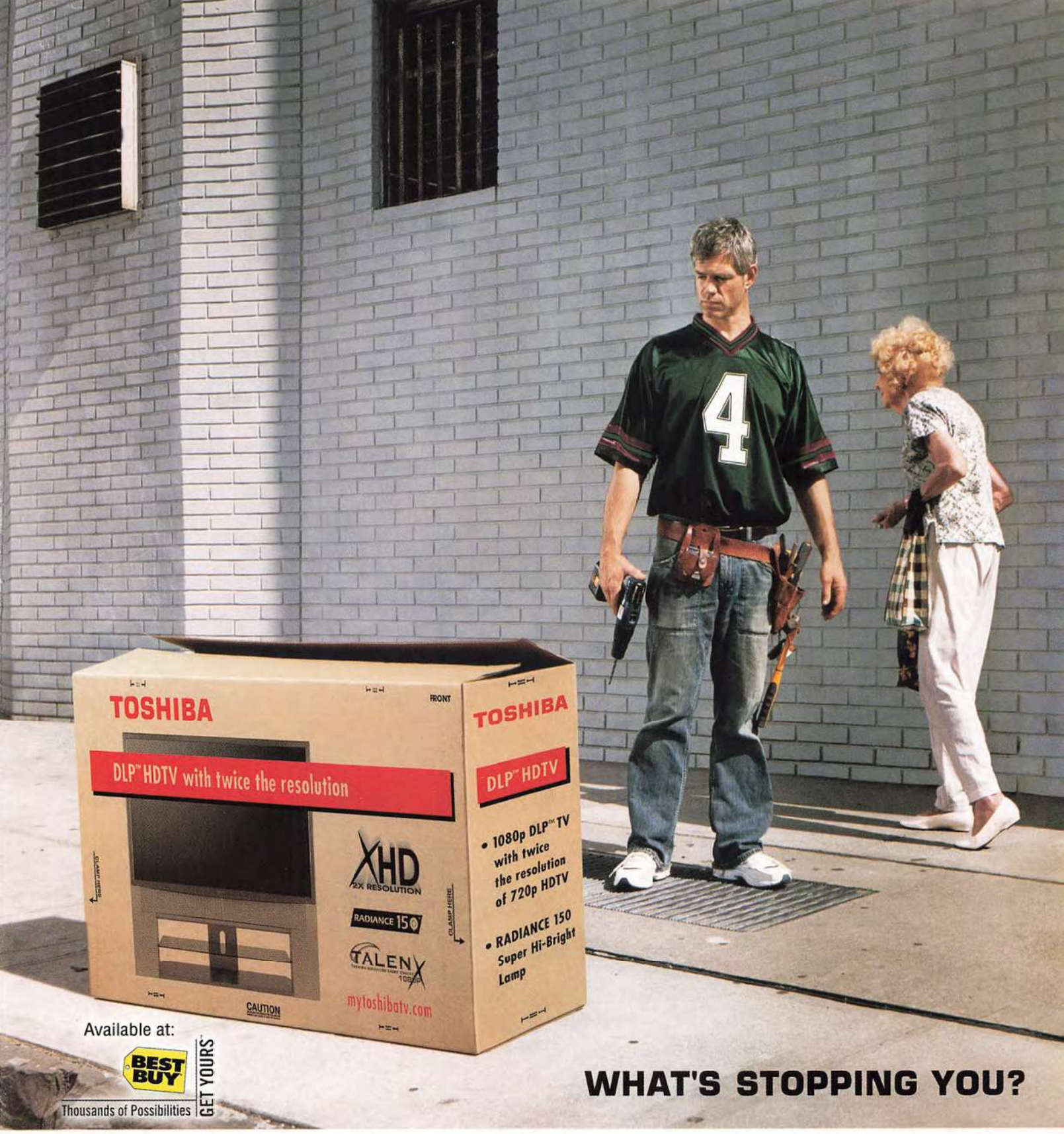
David Drapkin/Getty Images

THE GIANTS' JEREMY SHOCKEY GETS BEHIND EVERYONE.

FIRST DOWN



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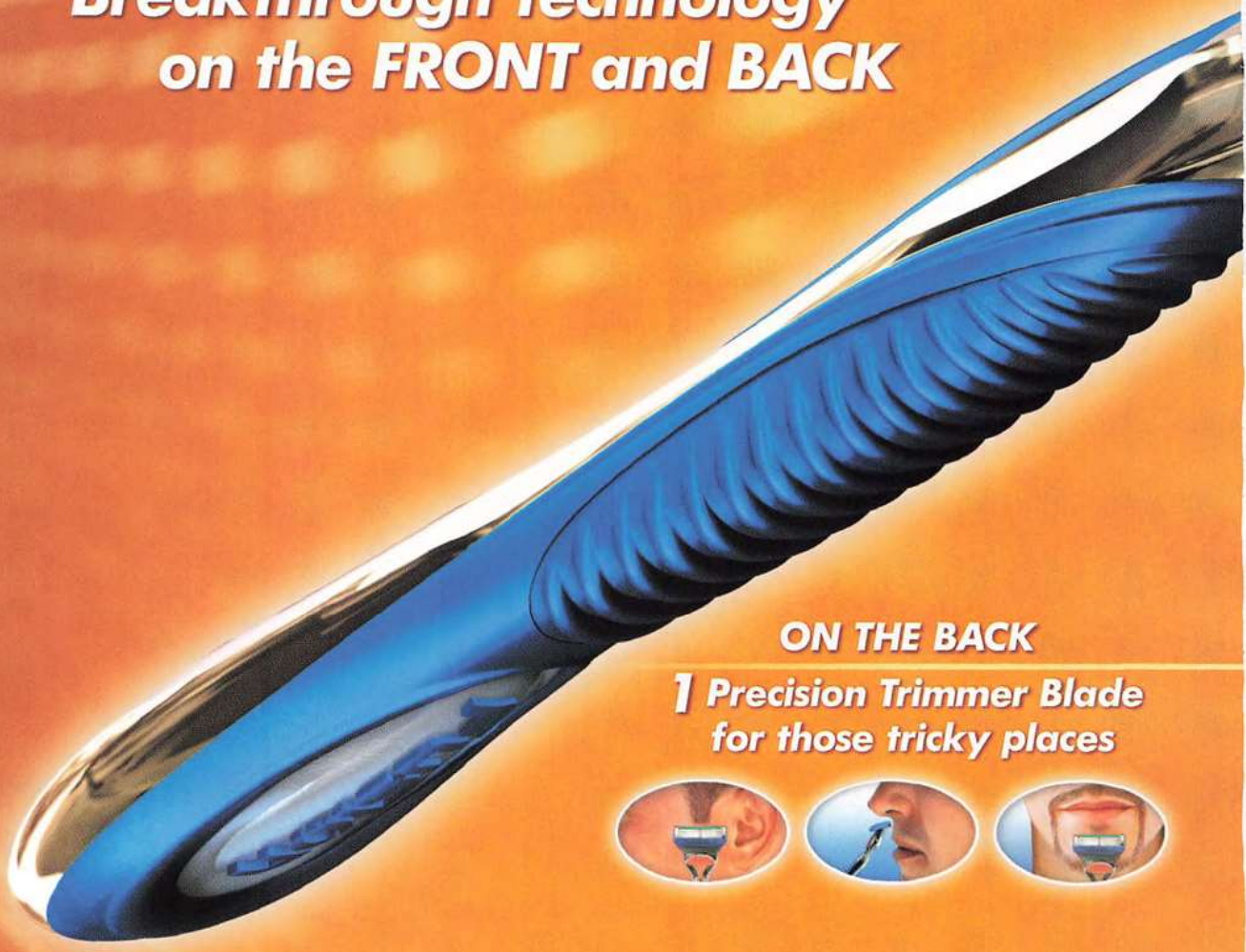

ON THE BACK

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The Best a Man Can Get™

SUPER BOWL XL

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Detroit has *changed*...

the way America moves

and what America hears.

Detroit is *where*...

Barry ran wild and

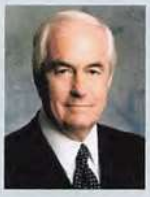
Thanksgiving means football.

David Stluka/Getty Images

Paul Warner/Wireimage.com

Courtesy of Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

The National Football League's championship game has returned to Detroit for a second time. You will find a city steeped in automotive and musical heritage, proud of its athletic tradition, and experiencing an ongoing civic renewal. ■ Super Bowl XL has helped set the goalposts for this rebirth. Over the past five years, Detroit has seen the opening of Campus Martius Park, renovations to Detroit's signature building–the Renaissance Center, the transformation of the city's international riverfront, residential loft developments, and the opening of more than two dozen new restaurants and clubs. ■ This renewal also includes the completion of Ford Field, one of the league's premier stadiums and home to Super Bowl XL. ■ The Road to Forty has brought you to Detroit. ■ Welcome!



Roger S. Penske

Chairman, Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

The Road to Forty has brought you to Detroit. *Welcome!*

★ FORD FIELD ★

FIT FOR PRO FOOTBALL'S GRAND FINALE

One of the NFL's newest and most dynamic facilities, Ford Field is the site of Super Bowl XL and home to the Detroit Lions. The Ford family's commitment to the city and involvement in the National Football League built the facility and brought the Super Bowl back to Detroit for a second time.

The four-year-old stadium, located amid downtown Detroit's cityscape and adjacent to Comerica Park (home of the Detroit Tigers), has seating for 65,000 fans and features a FieldTurf playing surface.

Ford Field presents spectators with arguably the finest sightlines of any NFL stadium. Its design incorporates the old Hudson's department store warehouse, providing not only historical charm and unique Detroit flavor, but also significant space for banquet facilities, private suites and lounge areas, food courts, office space, and future development.

The complex includes a seven-story atrium abutting a glass wall at the stadium's southwest corner offering views of the Detroit skyline. Ford Field hosts more than 120 events per year, including concerts, banquets, business meetings, and tradeshows. The Motor City Bowl and the Detroit Football Classic also are played there.

Carlos Osorio/AP WWP

DETAILS ON DETROIT...MOTORS, MUSIC, AND MUCH MORE

Located in southeastern Michigan, Detroit was founded in 1701 when French explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac landed on the banks of what is now the Detroit River. It is the largest city in the state and ranks 11th in the country with a population exceeding 900,000. Detroit's metropolitan region—including Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties—has more than four million residents.

Incorporated in 1815, Detroit spent the decades leading up to the Civil War as the final U.S. stop on the Underground Railroad. At the same time, the region was becoming a flourishing manufacturing center.

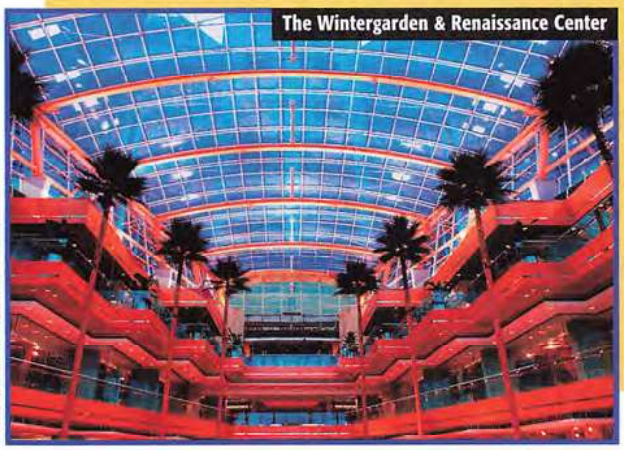
Henry Ford built his first car in Detroit in 1896 and the city has since become known worldwide for automobile manufacturing and trade. It serves as the world headquarters for General Motors Corporation and the Ford Motor Company, while the North American headquarters of DaimlerChrysler are located in metro Detroit. Overall, the city is home to 16 "Fortune 500" companies and the area ranks among the leaders in the production of paints, automation equipment, and non-electrical machinery.

Detroit is equally famous for its music, especially the Motown sound founded by Berry Gordy Jr. in 1957. Started with an $800 family loan, Gordy's company would introduce the world to Marvin Gaye, the Jackson Five, Stevie Wonder, Smokie Robinson, Diana Ross, and the Temptations—all of whom either grew up or gained their first fame in Detroit. The city also has produced some of the biggest names in today's music, including Kid Rock, Eminem, and the White Stripes.

Outside of New York City, Detroit has more theater seats than any other city east of the Mississippi River. It has the second tallest hotel in North America—the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center, which stands 73 stories—and is home to Belle Isle Park, the country's largest island park within a city.

Detroit can claim a number of American firsts, including the oldest state fair in the nation (an event that dates back to 1849). In 1879, it became the first city to assign individual telephone numbers and in 1896 founded the world's first convention bureau.

In road travel, Detroit had the nation's first mile of paved concrete road (1909), first traffic light (1915), and first urban freeway (the Davison, opened in 1942).



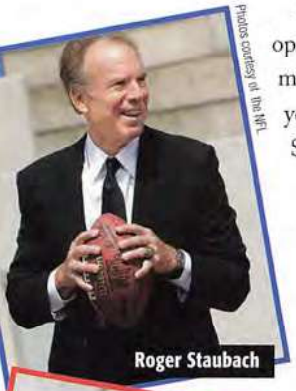
The Wintergarden & Renaissance Center

Courtesy of Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

ALONG THE ROAD

TELEVISING THE ROAD TO FORTY

While Detroit is the final destination, the NFL has been celebrating the Super Bowl's 40th anniversary since September with a season-long TV campaign entitled "The Road To Forty."


Photos courtesy of the NFL

Roger Staubach

Derrick Brooks

LaDainian Tomlinson

It started during the Patriots-Raiders contest on opening night and evolved into a series of six commercials aired during NFL games throughout the year. The ads feature 14 players, among them Super Bowl legends and current stars.

"As we celebrate our 40th Super Bowl, we wanted to honor the Super Bowl's tradition and history and connect it to the excitement of the 2005 season," says Michael Capiraso, NFL vice president and executive creative director.

The first spot, entitled "The Start," showed Bart Starr returning to the site of Super Bowl I—the Los Angeles Coliseum—where the quarterback won his first of two Super Bowl MVP awards as a member of the Green Bay Packers. Starr bumps into current Vikings QB Daunte Culpepper on the 40-yard line, leading to a sequence where Culpepper and viewers see highlights of Starr's legendary Super Bowl performances. Culpepper then goes back to work in his quest to win a Super Bowl.

Other legends included in the campaign are Marcus Allen, Franco Harris, Mike Singletary, Roger Staubach, and Doug Williams. Among the active players featured are Derrick Brooks, Tony Gonzalez, Jevon Kearse, Willie McGinest, Jonathan Vilma, Roy Williams, and LaDainian Tomlinson.

The "Road to Forty" campaign has become a prominent feature on SuperBowl.com with each ad appearing on the site once it aired. Also included are behind-the-scenes footage and player interviews.

AMONG THE SUPER SITES

Detroit is among 13 cities to host the Super Bowl and now joins Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Pasadena, San Diego, and Tampa as cities that have welcomed multiple Super Bowls. New Orleans has hosted the most Super Bowls (9), followed by Miami (8).

Ford Field becomes the 18th stadium to host a Super Bowl. When Super Bowl XVI between San Francisco and Cincinnati was played in Detroit, the game took place at the Silverdome.

Super Bowl XLI is scheduled for Feb. 4, 2007, at Dolphins Stadium.

STARTING IT UP

The NFL continued its tradition of having the season's first game played in the home of the defending Super Bowl champion and linking it to the site of the upcoming Super Bowl. Only this year's version had an added twist.

NFL Opening Kickoff 2005 was a one-hour entertainment extravaganza—emceed by Freddie Prinze Jr. and televised live by ABC—held Sept. 8 prior to the Raiders facing the Super Bowl XXXIX champion Patriots at Gillette Stadium. Among the performers live in Foxborough were Green Day, Santana, and Ozzy Osborne. From Detroit—home of Super Bowl XL—came excerpts of the Rolling Stones' Aug. 31 concert at Comerica Park, one of the first stops on their "A Bigger Bang" world tour.

The league also drew on its rich history and went to the Los Angeles Coliseum, where the first Super Bowl took place, for a live concert by Maroon 5 and Kanye West. Super Bowl XVIII MVP Marcus Allen and the University of Southern California marching band also appeared at the show.

Steve Grayson/WireImage.com

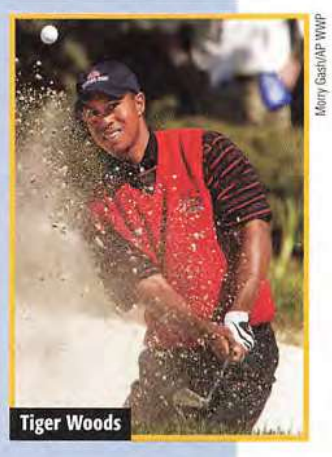
Kanye West

QUITE AN EVENTFUL CITY

Detroit has become a frequent host to both collegiate and pro championship events. In addition to Super Bowl XL, many other top-level competitions have recently been to the Motor City or are on their way in the next several years.

In 2004, golf's Ryder Cup was played at Oakland Hills Country Club and last July Comerica Park welcomed Major League Baseball's 76th All-Star Game.

Next month, the Palace of Auburn Hills hosts the first and second rounds of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, while in 2008 Ford Field hosts the NCAA Regionals. That will be followed in 2009 by the NCAA Final Four.


Morry Gash/AP WWP

Tiger Woods

Other events headed to Detroit include the 2007 NCAA Wrestling Championships (the Palace) and the 2010 NCAA Men's Ice Hockey Frozen Four (Ford Field). One of pro golf's majors—the PGA Championship—will be played at Oakland Hills in 2007.

In addition, prominent annual Detroit-area events include: the Buick Open, played at the Warwick Hills Golf & Country Club; the Detroit Football Classic, held at Ford Field during Labor Day weekend; and the Motor City Bowl, played between Christmas and New Year's Day, and won this season by Memphis over Akron.

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ABOUT DETROIT

PROGRAM PROVES THAT READING IS SUPER, TOO

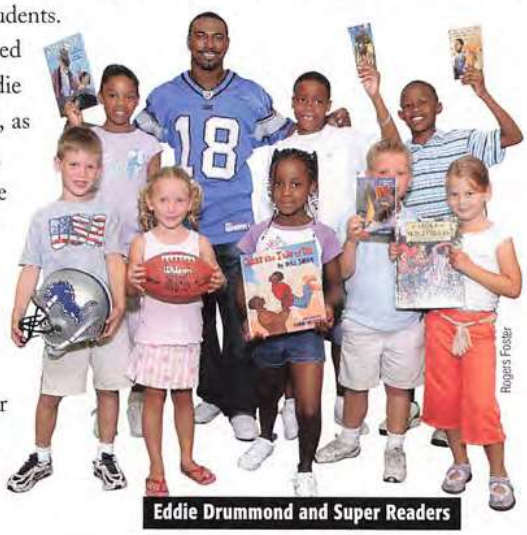
This past September, the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee initiated a Super Reading program to spread the love of reading to youngsters in the Detroit area.

Super Reading had three core focus areas: support of the Accelerated Reader program implemented by Detroit Public Schools; a library card challenge; and a book donation drive that distributed more than 17,000 books throughout the community.

In the spirit of Super Bowl XL, the Host Committee adopted third graders from 40 schools to participate in the Accelerated Reader program in an effort to help them transition from a position of "learning to read" to one of "reading to learn."

The Committee motivated students with special prizes, including autographed merchandise and Motown Winter Blast coupons for students. The class that read the most books received a visit from the Detroit Lions' star Eddie Drummond and the Lions' team mascot, as well as free tickets to the NFL Experience.

"The Super Bowl is not just about the game. It is also about the community," says Susan Sherer, executive director of the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee. "Detroit Public Schools had an established program that could use the Super Bowl to help reach their goals and encourage reading. We are proud to be able to support such an important initiative."



Rogers Foster

Eddie Drummond and Super Readers

GETTING IN THE GAME

With 100,000 visitors expected in greater Detroit for Super Bowl XL, area residents have displayed amazing spirit so that fans fully enjoy their Super Bowl experience.

Under the umbrella of "The World is Coming–Get in the Game," the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee has led volunteer and clean-up efforts taking place in conjunction with the game. More than 8,000 volunteers signed up to work at Super Bowl week events, while "super makeovers" have taken place since last May.

"The response from the community has been overwhelming," says Susan Sherer, executive director of the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee. "Our volunteers are the ambassadors to the city and play a significant role in a positive visitor experience as we welcome the world to Detroit. It all starts with them."

During Super Bowl week, nearly half of the volunteers are being stationed at the NFL Experience. They're also working at the Motown Winter Blast, staffing hotel lobbies and airport terminals, greeting visitors and answering questions at help desks.

Courtesy of Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

"Super Makeover" volunteers

The Host Committee has worked to complement ongoing community efforts such as the mayor's "Motor City Makeover." This is a continual campaign designed to enhance the city's image and generate a renewed commitment to keep Detroit clean.

For info, visit www.theworldiscoming.com.

HOME TO A HERO

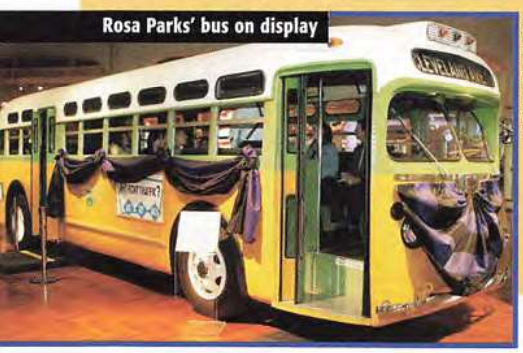
Last October, America lost one of its true heroes when Rosa Parks passed away at age 92. The mother of the modern civil rights movement had made Detroit her hometown for the past 48 years.

Parks entered the nation's consciousness on Dec. 1, 1955. A department store seamstress on her way home from work, Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. She was arrested and fined $10 (plus $4 in court costs), an incident that sparked a 381-day boycott of the city's bus system and ultimately led to a 1956 U.S. Supreme Court decision that ruled segregated seats on city buses were unconstitutional.

In 1957, Parks and her husband Raymond, along with her mother Leona McCauley, moved to Detroit. In 1974, the city renamed 12th Street in her honor.

Parks, who died on Oct. 25, 2005, became the first woman to lie in honor in Washington D.C.'s Capitol Rotunda, a tribute normally reserved for national leaders. Her body was then returned to Detroit, where more admirers paid their respects at the **Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History**.

Visitors to Detroit can see the bus (left) in which Parks "made her stand by sitting down." It was purchased by The Henry Ford in an on-line auction in 2001 and remains on exhibit at the museum in Dearborn.



Bill Pugliano/Getty Images

Rosa Parks' bus on display

Whether you're at home with a family of 4, or at the game with a family of 40,000.

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ABOUT DETROIT...

COME ONE. COME ALL — CULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SOCIAL LIFE

Want to know what's going on in Detroit in February? Plenty.

Here are a few of the many attractions that form the cultural, entertainment, and social life enjoyed by residents of—and visitors to—the Motor City all year long.

The Henry Ford (20900 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn) brings the "American Experience" to life with a rich offering of exhibits, demonstrations, programs, and reenactments. The venue consists of the Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, IMAX Theatre, Benson Ford Research Center, and the new Ford Rouge Factory Tour, which allows visitors to witness the assembly of Detroit's most famous product—the automobile.

The Motown Historical Museum (2648 West Grand Blvd.) is one of Detroit's most popular tourist destinations with exhibits that trace the roots of Motown's remarkable story and chronicle its impact on 20th century popular culture and musical styles.

Visitors here also may be interested in: **The Detroit Institute of Arts** (5200 Woodward Ave.), the country's fifth-largest fine arts museum; **The New Detroit Science Center** (5020 John R.), which recently underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation; the **Detroit Historical Museum** (5401 Woodward Ave.); and the **Michigan Sports Hall of Fame** (1 Washington Blvd.).

Ford Field and **Comerica Park** serve as a gateway to Detroit's entertainment and theater district. Restaurants and bars are a short walk from the stadiums and the city is home to numerous theaters, several of which are serving as Super Bowl event venues. Detroit also has two very lively districts—**Greektown** and **Mexicantown**—providing many ethnic dining selections and other entertainment options.

Downtown Detroit has come alive with the new **Compuware Center**, a $350 million development on Woodward Avenue, and the **Renaissance Center**, which houses General Motors' world headquarters. Both complexes have attracted a growing number of new retail outlets, entertainment venues, and restaurants to their surrounding areas. In November 2004, **Campus Martius Park**—a $22 million dollar downtown park—opened in the heart of the business district and features an ice rink, indoor café, and concert shell.

Another major project is the $500 million transformation of the city's riverfront, allowing Detroiters to reconnect with the waterway that built the city. The first phase of the riverwalk opened with a newly landscaped shoreline that stretches from **Joe Louis Arena** to **Hart Plaza**. The project includes a five-mile network of parks along the waterfront to the **Belle Isle Bridge** expected to be completed by year's end.

For more ideas to get the most out of a visit to Detroit, go to www.visitdetroit.com.

Courtesy of Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

Detroit Institute of Arts

Ford Rouge Factory Tour

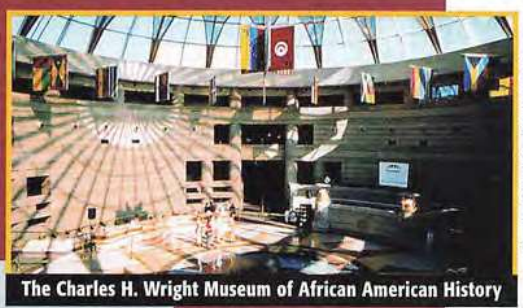
Courtesy of Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN PRO FOOTBALL

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History has an exhibit on display sure to attract football fans during Super Bowl week. The Museum's AT&T Gallery is featuring "Gridiron to Greatness: African Americans in Professional Football," which opened in September and is scheduled to run through March 26.

This exhibition chronicles the history of blacks in professional football in general and the NFL in particular. Players from various time periods are highlighted, illustrating the outstanding achievements of black athletes on the field, in the community, and in their post-professional lives. The issues of racism and the role of sports desegregation are explored through use of artifacts, photographs, video, and memorabilia.

Opened in 1965, the museum is now a 120,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility that is the world's largest historical museum celebrating significant events and accomplishments of African Americans.



The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Courtesy of Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee

Open: Wednesday through Saturday
Where: 315 East Warren Ave.
Tickets: $8 for adults, $5 for children and senior citizens
For more information: (313) 494-5800 / www.maahdetroit.org

...AND BEYOND

JOINING IN THE FUN

It takes more than a city to host a Super Bowl and the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee and the NFL know that well.

Seven Michigan communities and the Canadian city of Windsor have been tabbed "Super Cities" by the Host Committee and are hosting officially sanctioned events surrounding Super Bowl XL.

The Michigan cities—Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Farmington/Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Mt. Clemens, Rochester, and Troy—all look to have their residents and Super Bowl visitors attend events and enjoy the many businesses operating there.

Highlights include:

- From Jan. 27-Feb. 4, the **Ferndale** Blues Festival takes place across the city's downtown. Most venues are free and one-hundred percent of donations are going to AIDS/HIV charities.
- **Rochester** events include The Game 101 Expo on Feb. 1 at the Royal Park Hotel (9 a.m.-3 p.m.) and the Kid Crawl on Feb. 4 at Rochester Municipal Park (1 p.m.-4 p.m.).
- The **Troy** Supper Bowl takes place on Jan. 29 at The Somerset Collection. It includes football films, NFL player and alumni appearances, kids' zone, auction, skill contest, and tailgate-style food. Proceeds benefit the Troy Chamber's Non-Profit Network.

For more information and a full list of events: www.sbxl.org.

"This will be the first-ever international Super Bowl."

—Eddie Francis, Windsor Mayor

Courtesy of Convention & Visitors Bureau of Windsor

The Canadian city of Windsor, located across the Detroit River, looks to draw upon the excitement of Super Bowl XL.

The **NFL/CFL Flag Football National Championships** take place Feb. 3-5 at The Soccer Place (3939 Carmichael Drive) to crown the Canadian representative for the 2006 NFL Flag Football World Championships.

The Cleary International Centre (201 Riverside Drive West) is the site of the **Rbk NFL Fan Zone**, an all-age interactive football theme park. It runs from 3 p.m.-8 p.m. on Feb. 2-3 and from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Feb. 4. Tickets are priced at $6 each.

Visitors can enjoy the **Downtown Windsor Ice Festival** (City Hall and Charles Clark Square) and the **Downtown Windsor Tailgate Party** (Dieppe Gardens along the Detroit River), which run Feb. 3-5. The **Art Gallery of Windsor** (401 Riverside Drive West) is displaying classic NFL photos.

From Detroit, you can enter Canada at the Detroit Windsor Tunnel and the Ambassador Bridge. You should have two forms of identification.

For more information, log on: www.visitwindsor.com / www.sbxl.org

As part of the Super Bowl XL celebration, 13 members of the Detroit sports media selected the city's 40 defining sports moments.

Year	Consensus Moments
1901	University of Michigan plays in the first Rose Bowl and beats Stanford, 49-0.
1926	Ty Cobb sets baseball's hit record; retires in 1928 with .367 career average.
1934	Lions begin Thanksgiving Day tradition.
1935	"The City of Champions" with Lions, Tigers, and Red Wings winning titles.
1935	Jesse Owens sets three world records and ties another in track meet in Ann Arbor.
1938	The Tigers' Hank Greenberg leads the American League with 58 home runs.
1938	Joe Louis defeats Max Schmeling via knockout.
1941	Ted Williams' All-Star Game game-winning home run.
1950s	The Red Wings dominate the NHL with four Stanley Cup titles in six years.
1951	Ben Hogan wins U.S. Open, beating "the Monster" at Oakland Hills.
1954	Arnold Palmer wins the U.S. Amateur at the Country Club of Detroit.
1957	Lions capture fourth NFL Championship.
1963	Gordie Howe becomes NHL's all-time goal leader, scoring his 545th goal.
1966	Michigan State and Notre Dame play to 10-10 tie in "The Game of the Century."
1968	The Tigers' Denny McLain wins 31 games.
1968	Tigers capture the World Series.
1968	Spencer Haywood leads Olympic men's basketball team to gold medal.
1969	Bo vs. Woody begins the ongoing rivalry between Michigan and Ohio State.
1971	Reggie Jackson's All-Star home run.
1974	The Tigers' Al Kaline gets his 3,000th hit.
1976	Mark Fidrych shuts down the Yankees on Monday Night Baseball.
1979	Magic Johnson vs. Larry Bird.
1980	Thomas Hearns knocks out Pipino Cuevas to win WBC welterweight title.
1980	Billy Sims' first game with the Lions; he rushes for 120 yards and scores 3 TDs.
1984	Tigers start season 35-5 and win the World Series.
1988	Isiah Thomas' 25 points in a quarter on a sprained ankle in Game 6 of NBA Finals.
1989	University of Michigan wins NCAA Men's Basketball title.
1989	The Pistons (a.k.a. "The Bad Boys") win their first of back-to-back NBA Championships.
1991	Univ. of Michigan's Desmond Howard strikes his Heisman pose in Ohio State game.
1991	Lions reach NFC Championship Game.
1992	The "Fab Five" come to Ann Arbor.
1997	Red Wings' Darren McCarty gets revenge for Claude Lemieux's hit on Kris Draper.
1997	Steve Yzerman stars as Red Wings win their first Stanley Cup in 42 seasons.
1997	University of Michigan wins college football's National Championship.
1997	Barry Sanders rushes for 2,000 yards.
1999	Tiger Stadium closes after 77 years.
2000	Michigan State captures NCAA Men's Basketball title.
2003	Detroit Shock win WNBA Championship.
2004	Pistons/GM Joe Dumars capture NBA Championship.
—	*Lions' Roaring No. 20s:* Lem Barney, Barry Sanders, and Billy Sims.

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

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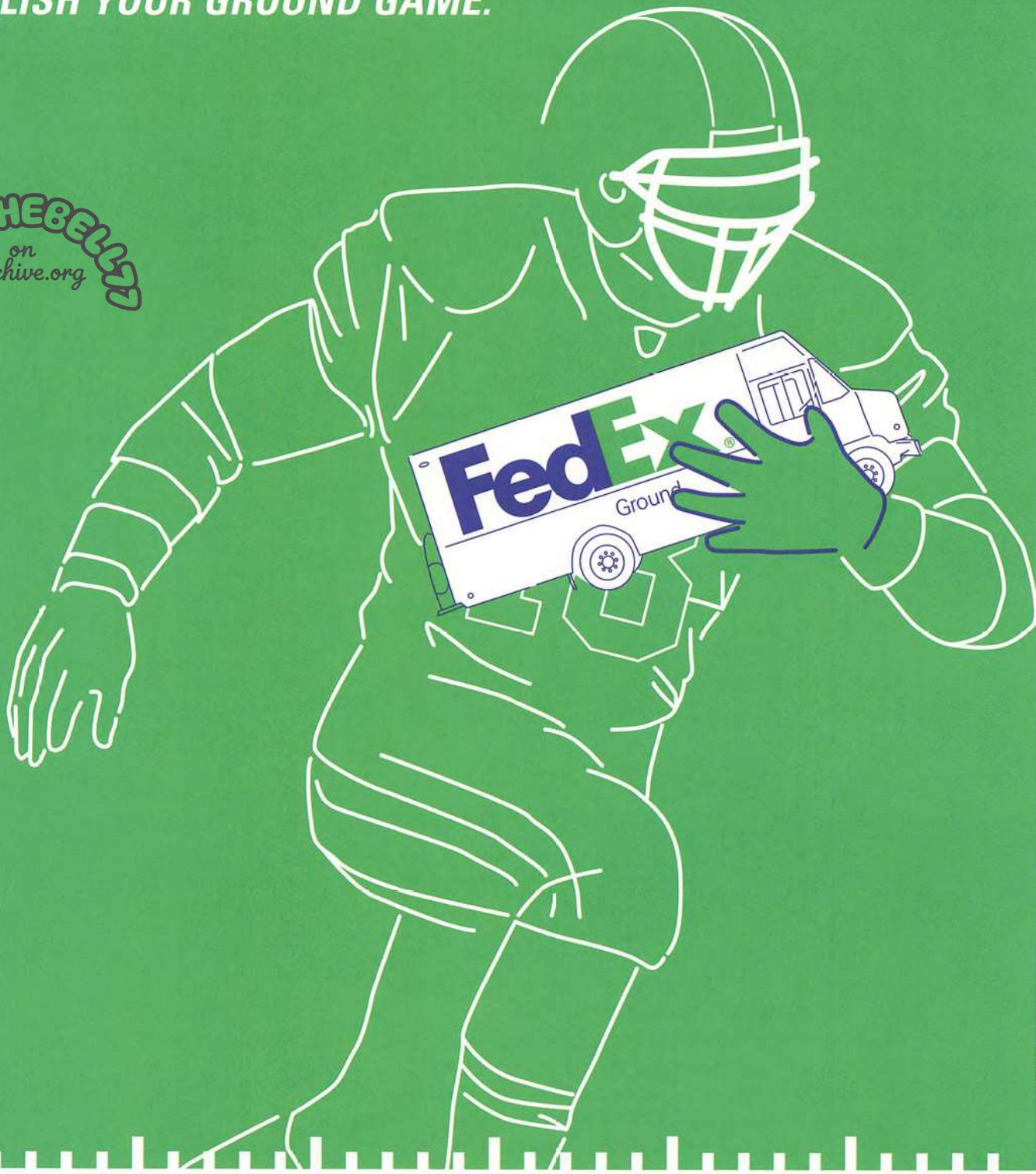

SUPER BOWL XL
40TH ANNIVERSARY

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SUPER WEEK

STARTING OFF WITH A SALUTE

Super Bowl week starts off with a sensational opening ceremony when the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee holds *A Detroit Salute* on Monday, Jan. 30, at the Fox Theatre.

Courtesy of ABC, Inc./Gil Valentin

Mike Tirico

More than 2,800 people are expected to attend the charity event presented by General Motors Corporation, Ford Motor Company, and DaimlerChrysler.

Veteran ABC/ESPN sportscaster Mike Tirico, a Detroit-area resident, is serving as emcee/host for the gala, which celebrates the Super Bowl's arrival as well as some of the city's most famous offerings: music, sports, and automobiles. The evening also honors individuals and teams comprising many of Detroit's 40 defining sports moments (see page 43 for the full list).

Tickets may be purchased for the entire evening, including a 6 p.m. reception and dinner, or for the 9 p.m. show, which features the music of KEM, a local Motown recording artist and adult R&B Artist of the Year by *Radio & Record*.

Expected in attendance are the head coaches of the participating Super Bowl teams, NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, and Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee Chairman Roger Penske.

A tribute to Detroit's domestic auto manufacturers will feature special appearances by Rick Wagoner, Chairman and CEO of General Motors; Bill Ford Jr., Chairman and CEO of Ford Motor Company; and Tom LaSorda, President and CEO of DaimlerChrysler Corp.

Getty Images

"We are proud to host Super Bowl XL in Detroit and 'A Detroit Salute' celebrates what is great about our city," says Penske. "This event showcases three of Detroit's greatest gifts to the world—autos, sports, and music."

The Host Committee's charitable arm, the Greater Detroit Charitable Foundation, will be the recipient of the evening's proceeds and funds will go to support community initiatives and select non-profit agencies. Among the recipients is Detroit's NFL Youth Education Town.

This is the third straight year the local Super Bowl Host Committee is holding an event to open Super Bowl week. For more information on *A Detroit Salute* and other events taking place during the week, log on to www.sbxl.org.

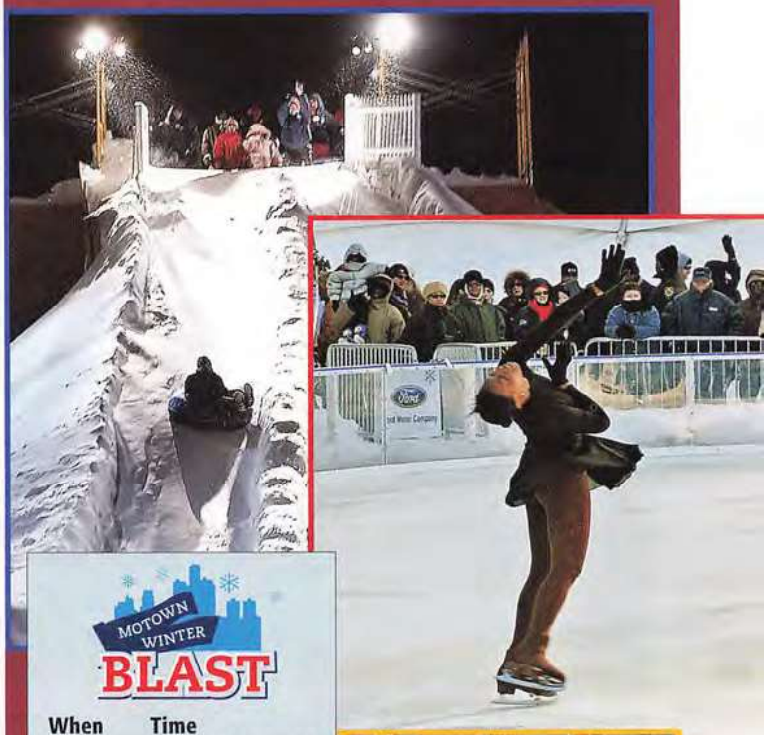
HAVE A BLAST IN MOTOWN

Motown Winter Blast, Detroit's newest wintertime festival, provides an exciting backdrop for Super Bowl XL by embracing the game's northern setting and celebrating winter in Detroit. MWB is open to the public Feb. 2-5, with Campus Martius Park serving as its centerpiece.

Among the activities is the Ford Motor Company Family Fun Zone, which includes free ice skating, skating exhibitions and demonstrations, and a kids' entertainment stage. The General Motors Ice Garden also is free to the public and features national entertainment Thursday through Saturday. There also are football-inspired ice sculptures and the Detroit Marketplace, a shopping area for local artists and vendors.

Visitors also may enjoy the michigan.org Winter Experience, with two 200-foot snow slides, a free children's play area, and dog sledding exhibitions, and the Chrysler Jeep Dodge Taste of Detroit, which features more than 20 local restaurants and three music stages, with more than 60 local bands performing.

Motown Winter Blast debuted in January 2005 to officially begin the countdown to Super Bowl XL in Detroit. The 2006 layout is three times larger than last year.



MOTOWN WINTER BLAST

When	Time
Feb. 2	4 p.m.-12 midnight
Feb. 3-4	11 a.m.-1 a.m.
Feb. 5	10 a.m.-1 p.m.

For more information
www.motownwinterblast.com

Photos by www.clwphotography.com

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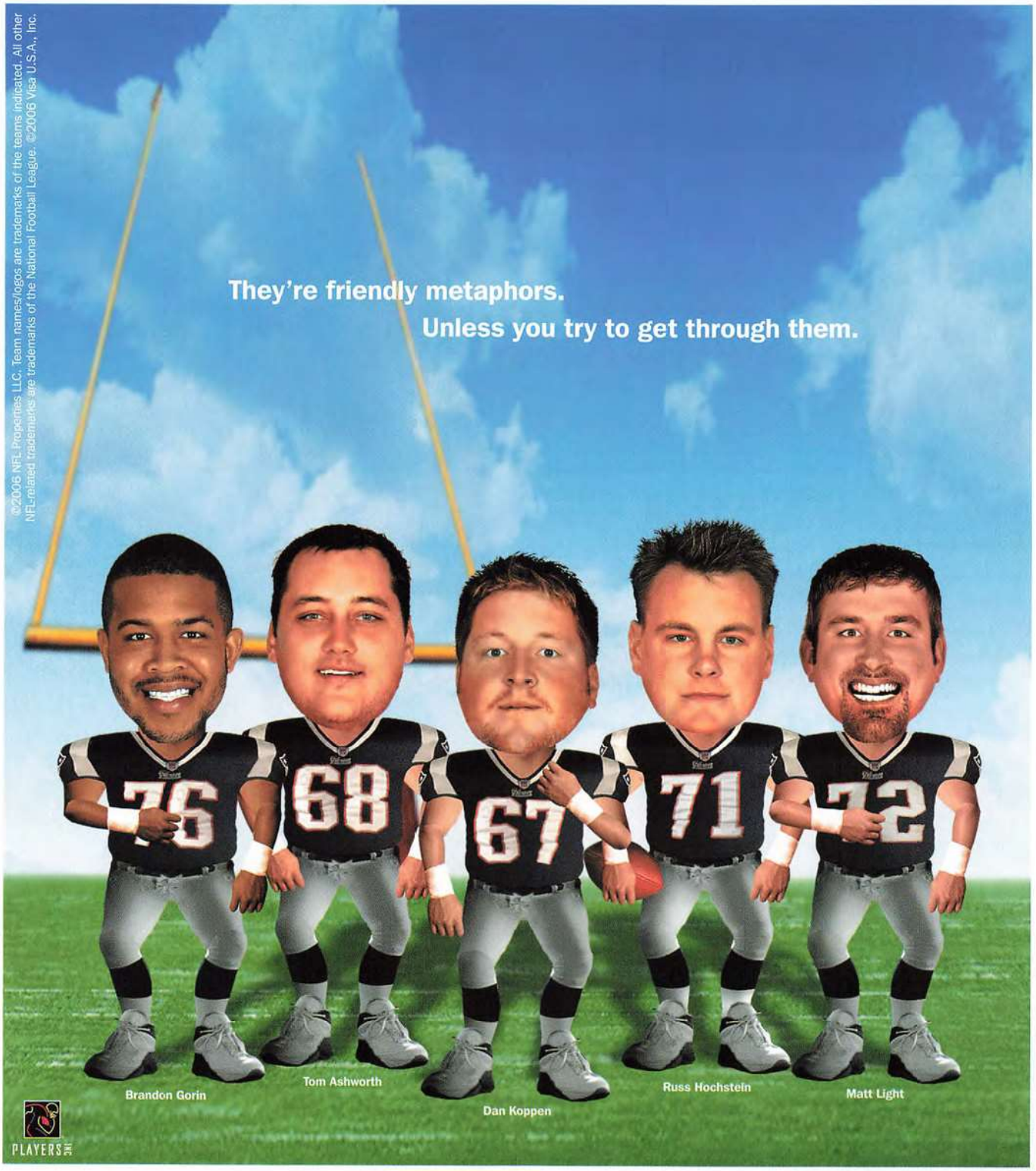

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SUPER BOWL XL
DETROIT
FEBRUARY 5, 2006

EXPERIENCE PLENTY OF FAMILY FUN AT THE NFL EXPERIENCE

The NFL Experience, the interactive theme park that annually precedes the Super Bowl, lights up downtown Detroit's Cobo Center from Feb. 1-5.

America Online Presents the NFL Experience spans nearly 800,000 square feet and features more than 50 interactive games and attractions. Designed to enlighten and entertain the entire family, it puts the ball in the fans' hands, enabling men, women, and children the opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere of Super Bowl XL.

"This is a celebration of football for fans in Detroit, as well as visitors throughout Michigan," says Frank Supovitz, the NFL's senior vice president of events. "It provides everybody a chance to participate in the game of football, while at the same time helping the community by generating charitable funds."

Those attending the NFL Experience can test their skills in a variety of football attractions in which they can run, throw, punt, kick, and pass just like the pros.

America Online will showcase the AOL Field House at the NFL Experience, offering an entertaining fan experience including flick football, the AOL Game Show, photo booths, and more. The AOL Field House also offers a complete interactive experience for NFL fans, featuring NFL on AOL and AOL.com.

Other interactive areas include "The Drive," where fans can experience the ultimate in resistance training as they struggle to score a touchdown while harnessed to a bungee, and "Quarterback Challenge," allowing contestants to show off their passing accuracy on special targets in a challenge modeled after the televised competition of the same name. "Fantasy Play By Play" enables would-be broadcasters to announce great plays in NFL history. This year's NFL Experience also features a "Kids' Zone," offering games and attractions designed especially for youngsters.

The Topps Super Bowl XL Card Show gives fans an opportunity to obtain autographs from as many as 50 current and former NFL stars who will be on hand, as well as purchase a variety of merchandise from 35,000 square feet of displays and rare collectibles. The Foot Locker/Champs Sports NFL Team Shop covers nearly 35,000 square feet and features an extensive collection of NFL licensed merchandise from all 32 teams.

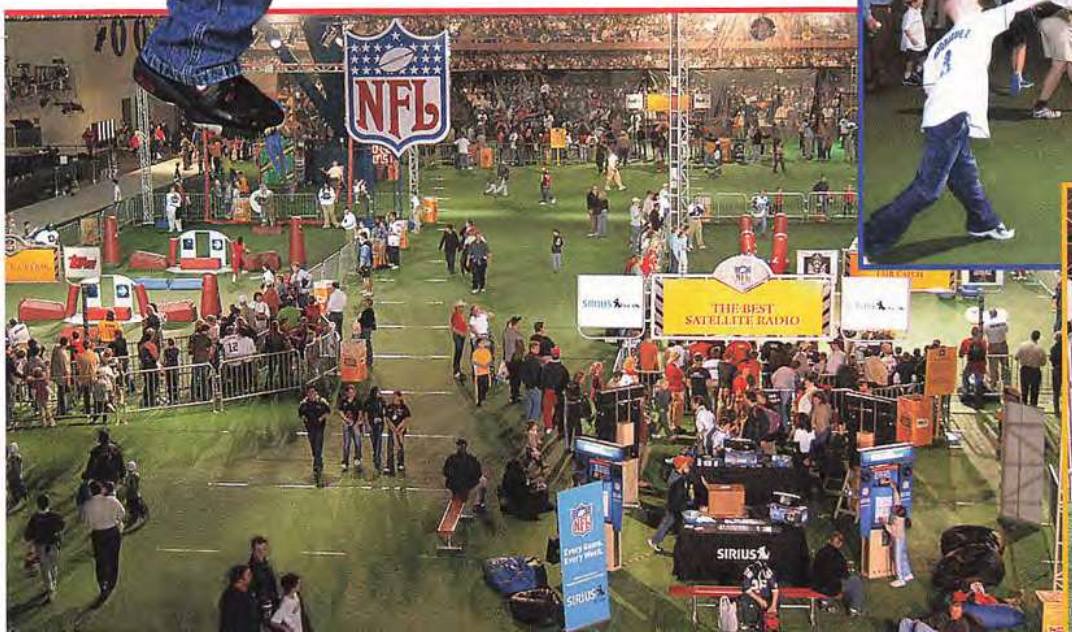
Visitors to the NFL Experience also may see the visual history of the NFL at the Pro Football Hall of Fame NFL Throwbacks Exhibit. In this area, visitors can view a variety of authentic artifacts, including photographs and one-of-a-kind items on loan from the Pro Football Hall of Fame that capture the last 86 years of the NFL.

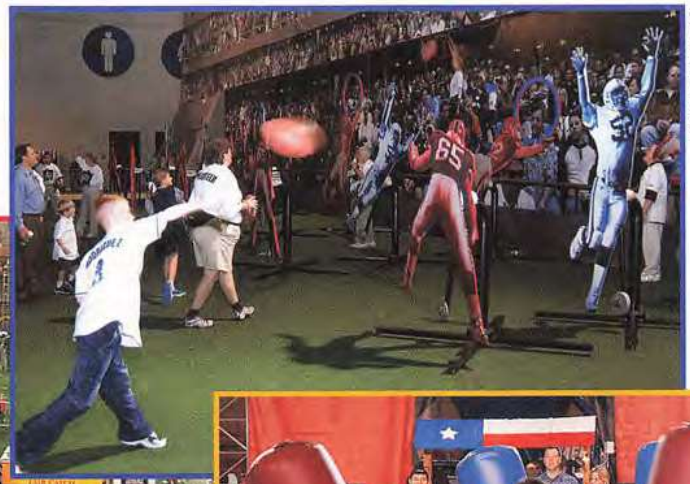
When	Time	To Purchase Tickets
Feb. 1	4 p.m.-10 p.m.	(866) TIX-4NFL / www.superbowl.com
Feb. 2 & 3	3 p.m.-10 p.m.	Tickets are $15 for adults and $10 for
Feb. 4	10 a.m.-10 p.m.	children 12 and under, and permit entry
Feb. 5	10 a.m.-4 p.m.	for a particular day and time.

All activities are included in the price of admission. Fans may stay in the theme park as long as they like, but re-entry is not permitted.

Gate proceeds are being donated to the NFL's Super Bowl legacy program–the Youth Education Town (YET)–to be built in Detroit.

America Online presents NFL EXPERIENCE





Photos courtesy of the NFL

NFL REACHES OUT TO DETROIT COMMUNITY WITH MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMS

The sights, sounds, and ethnic diversity of Detroit are being captured through multicultural outreach programs during Super Bowl week.

They are all part of the NFL's Community Impact program, a major facet of the Super Bowl each year. The NFL works with local organizations to develop programs focusing on the education, advancement, and leadership of both racial and gender minorities in the host city. This year's roster of programs boasts an exciting array of youth, business, health, leadership, and cultural events.

One World, One Detroit

With the help of 13 Detroit youth groups, several hundred students have participated in field trips over the past several months that have served as an immersion into African-American, Arab, and Hispanic cultures. The half-day trips were designed to reinforce messages learned through the NFL/Scholastic "One World: Connecting Communities, Cultures and Classrooms" program and provide students an opportunity to explore the achievements and contributions of the various ethnic groups in the Detroit region.

The culminating event—*One World, One Detroit*—on Jan. 28, challenges students to express their new cultural awareness through dance, art, and debate. Workshops have been designed to showcase ethnic differences, explore sensitivity, and allow students to role-play creative resolutions to subjects including bias, bullying, and tolerance. It concludes with a town hall meeting encouraging students to speak out about the experiences and challenges related to diversity and cultural understanding.

Artistic Expressions

In partnership with leading fine arts and cultural organizations, the NFL is presenting *Nations In Rhythm*, a celebration of Detroit's rich cultural diversity and artistic tradition, on Jan. 28. The 90-minute show features visual arts, dance, and song performed to a world beat. Eight ethnically diverse cultural arts groups have worked together to blend their music, dance, and cultures in a performance of unity.

The NFL also has partnered with the Arts League of Michigan and the Mosaic Youth Theatre to host the Super Bowl's Black History Month tribute *Rock My Soul*. This 90-minute performance of song and dance celebrates the African-American experience and its cultural traditions. The show, on Jan. 31 at The Detroit Institute of Arts, traces music from the tribal communication of the African drum through the early days of jazz, blues, and Motown, all the way to the hip-hop sounds of today.

Among the many performers scheduled to appear at *Rock My Soul* are the internationally recognized Mosaic Theatre troupe, the Black Bottom Collective, Marcus Belgrave, and the Buku Productions Theatre.

Courtesy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame

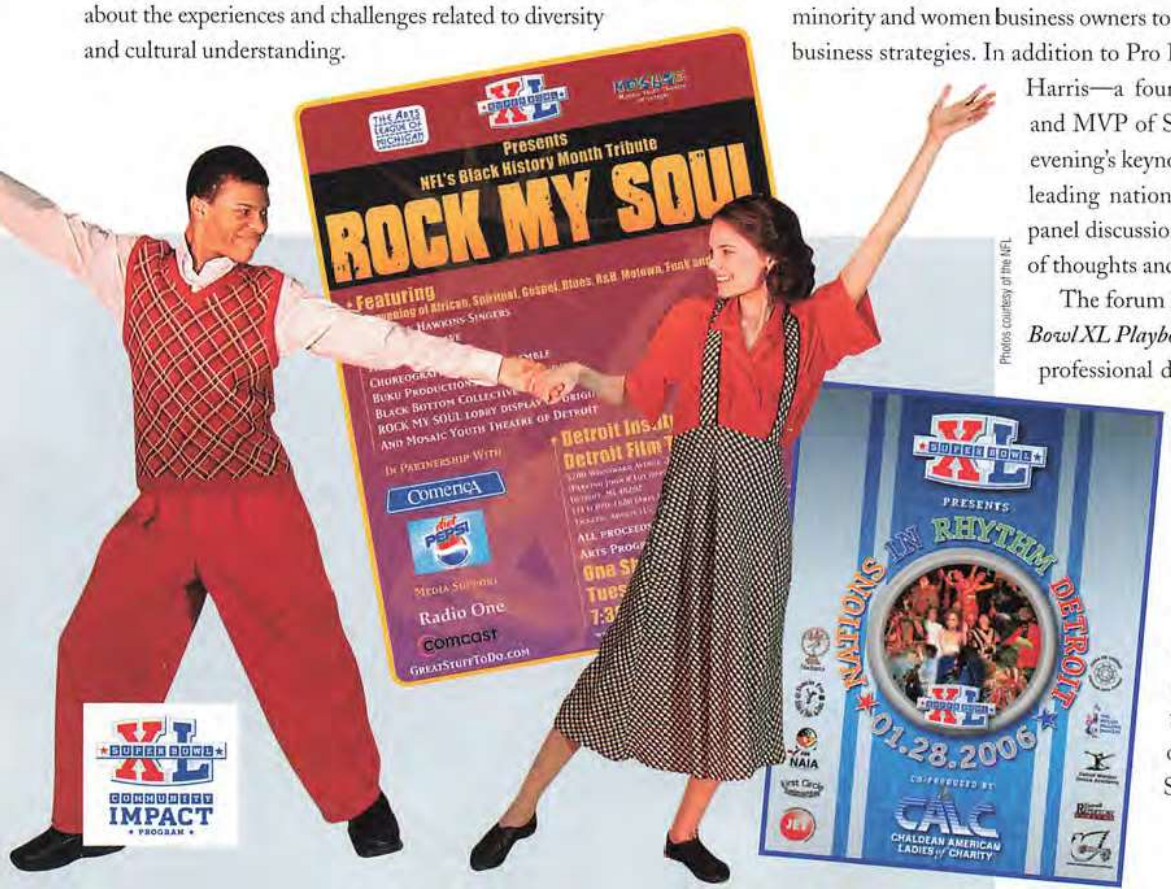
Franco Harris

Business Forum

Detroit's leading minority business leadership groups are joining with the NFL to host the *Super Bowl Diversity Business Forum*.

Scheduled for Feb. 1 at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Max M. Fisher Theatre, the event brings together corporate leaders, up-and-coming business executives, and minority and women business owners to discuss leadership and winning business strategies. In addition to Pro Football Hall of Famer Franco Harris—a four-time Super Bowl champion and MVP of Super Bowl IX—serving as the evening's keynote speaker, top executives from leading national corporations are heading a panel discussion for an enlightening exchange of thoughts and perspectives.

The forum is the culmination of the *Super Bowl XL Playbook for Small Business*, a series of professional development workshops hosted by the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce and its diversity partners. These workshops, which launched last September, have been designed to educate, engage, and empower small business owners and operators throughout Detroit so they can fully take advantage of business opportunities long after the Super Bowl is over.



Photos courtesy of the NFL

SUPER BOWL XL

DETROIT
FEBRUARY 5, 2006

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Archive.org

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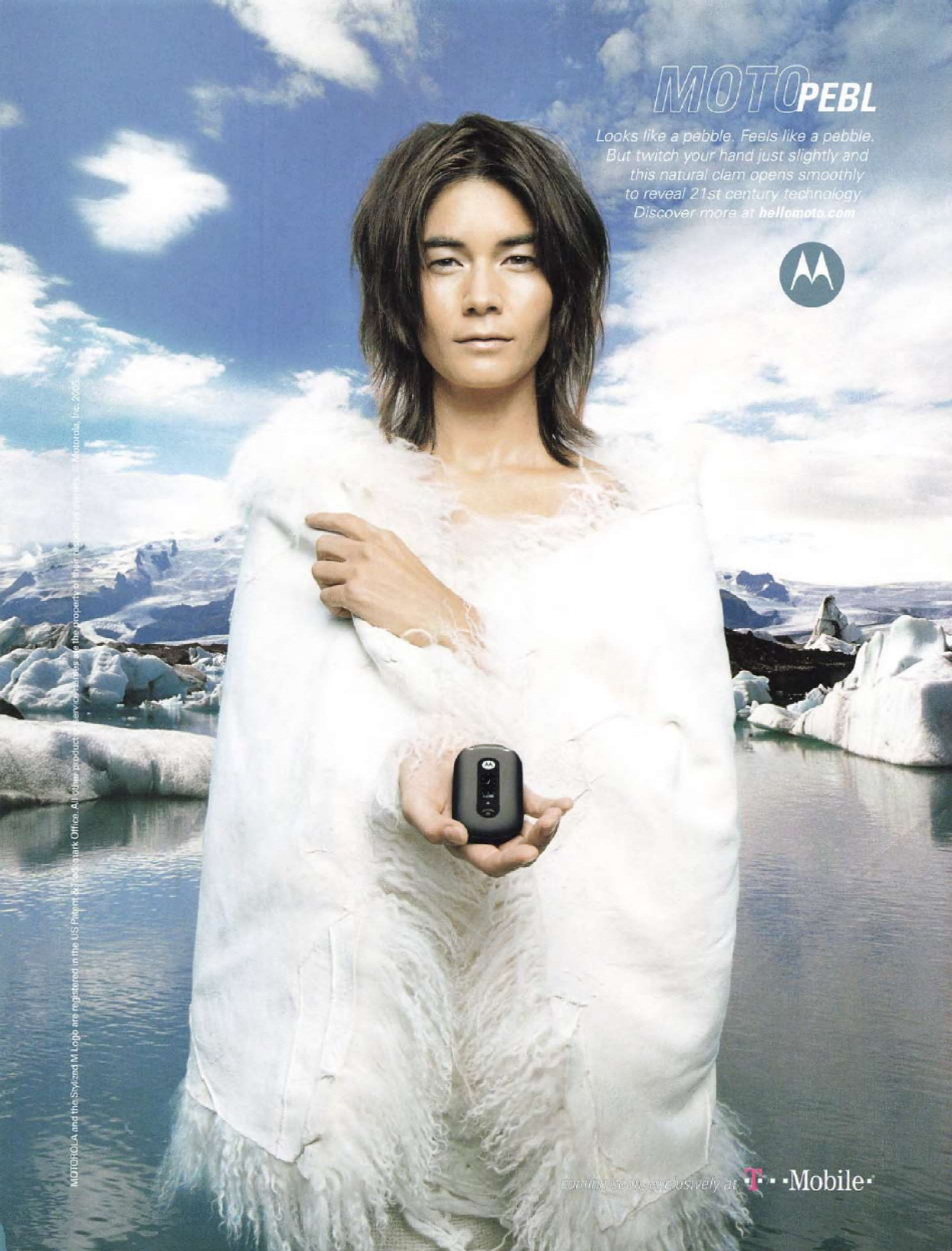
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NFL ADDS TO SUPER BOWL LEGACY PROGRAM WITH LARGEST-EVER YET CENTER

As part of its Super Bowl legacy program, the NFL has announced it will build a state-of-the-art *NFL Youth Education Town* in Detroit that will serve more than 2,500 children a year.

Since 1993, YETs have served as the Super Bowl's legacy in each host city where they positively impact youth living in at-risk neighborhoods. Construction on Detroit's 30,000-square-foot complex—the largest-ever YET Center project—is expected to begin this spring at Gardenview Estates. It will include a gym, game room, teen center, multi-media studio, arts and crafts center, playground, and outdoor athletic fields. Programs at the center will be managed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan.

The NFL and the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee have donated $2 million to the project. Richard E. Dauch, cofounder, chairman, and CEO of American Axle & Manufacturing Holdings Inc., and his wife, Sandra, are donating $1.5 million, while Buffalo Bills owner Ralph Wilson, who was raised in Detroit and resides in Grosse Pointe, made a significant contribution as well.

"Thanks to the donations from the NFL, the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee, and others, we're going to have a wonderful facility for our children," says Tom Hoeg, chairman of the board for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan.

NFL YOUTH EDUCATION ★ TOWN ★

This is the second time that the NFL YET initiative has partnered with a local Housing and Urban Development project. The Detroit YET will be part of a newly developed 139-acre community that is going to include more than 900 housing units, commercial development, and a renovated public school.

Ehresman Associates Inc.

EXPANDING THE GAME'S LOCAL IMPACT

The NFL and the Detroit Super Bowl Host Committee are working to expand the impact of Super Bowl XL to diverse businesses in Michigan through the league's *Emerging Business Program*.

This year, 16 business education workshops were held throughout Detroit to assist Michigan-based minority businesses with writing business plans, procurement procedures, joint venturing, financing, and other strategies. The sessions featured NFL speakers, successful entrepreneurs, and business instructors and were attended by nearly 2,000 people.

Since 1994, the Emerging Business Program has provided educational programs for developing small business owners, and seeks to promote awareness of–and increase business opportunities for–local minority and woman-owned businesses in the cities that host the Super Bowl.

Another aspect of the program is the On-Line Business Resource Guide. This guide strives to increase opportunities for minority and woman-owned firms to participate in the bidding process for Super Bowl–related contracts by providing easy access to information on these quality vendors to potential employers. More than 750 businesses participated in the on-line program this year.

Hobson Media Group

Workshop leaders gather following an Emerging Business Workshop in Detroit.

LEGENDS FOR CHARITY LUNCHEON

Courtesy of Fox Sports

The *Legends for Charity Luncheon* takes place on Feb. 3 at the Detroit Renaissance Center. This year's recipient of the "Pat Summerall Award" is long-time Fox Sports anchor James Brown.

The 1973 Harvard graduate is among the most accomplished and popular figures in sports broadcasting. For the past 10 years, he has co-hosted *FOX NFL Sunday*, the network's pregame show, and has won two Emmys for his work on the program. He also hosts *The James Brown Radio Show* daily on Sporting News Radio and is a correspondent for HBO's *Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel*.

Throughout his career, Brown has been active in his support for several charitable causes, including Darrell Green's Youth Life Foundation, Ronnie Lott's All Stars Helping Kids, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Neimann Pick Disease Foundation, and the Holly Rod Foundation. He also is a National Celebrity Volunteer for the March of Dimes.

Dick Stockton serves as the luncheon's master of ceremonies. Proceeds from the event benefit the United Network for Organ Sharing. To learn more about UNOS, visit www.unos.org.

For ticket information, contact Cheryl DeLeonardis of Ocean 2 Ocean Productions, Inc. at (954) 922-7013.

BRING SOMETHING BETTER HOME FROM SUPER BOWL XL

Walk away from this year's Super Bowl with something to remember forever. Get to your local Foot Locker or Champs Sports and check out the widest selection of Super Bowl XL memorabilia, including jerseys, jackets, hats, balls, and much more. There'll never be another Super Bowl XL again, so what are you waiting for?

CHAMPS SPORTS
WHERE SPORT LIVES

Foot Locker

SUPER WEEK

WATCH THE WORLD PLAY AT THE NFL GLOBAL JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

The *NFL Global Junior Championship* celebrates its 10th year of competition with teenage all-stars from Canada, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and the USA playing a round-robin tournament at the Silverdome in Pontiac on Jan. 25 and 29.

Canada enters the tournament as the defending champion, having won last year's event in Jacksonville and, in the process, snapping the USA's four-year winning streak.

Football fans might be surprised to learn that 16- to 19-year-olds from as far away as Asia and Europe can compete on the gridiron with North American all-stars. Since Mexico won the inaugural tournament in New Orleans in 1997, Canada, Europe, and the United States all have been crowned champions. Eight different nations, including teams from such football outposts as Russia and Panama, have competed for the NFL Global Junior Championship.

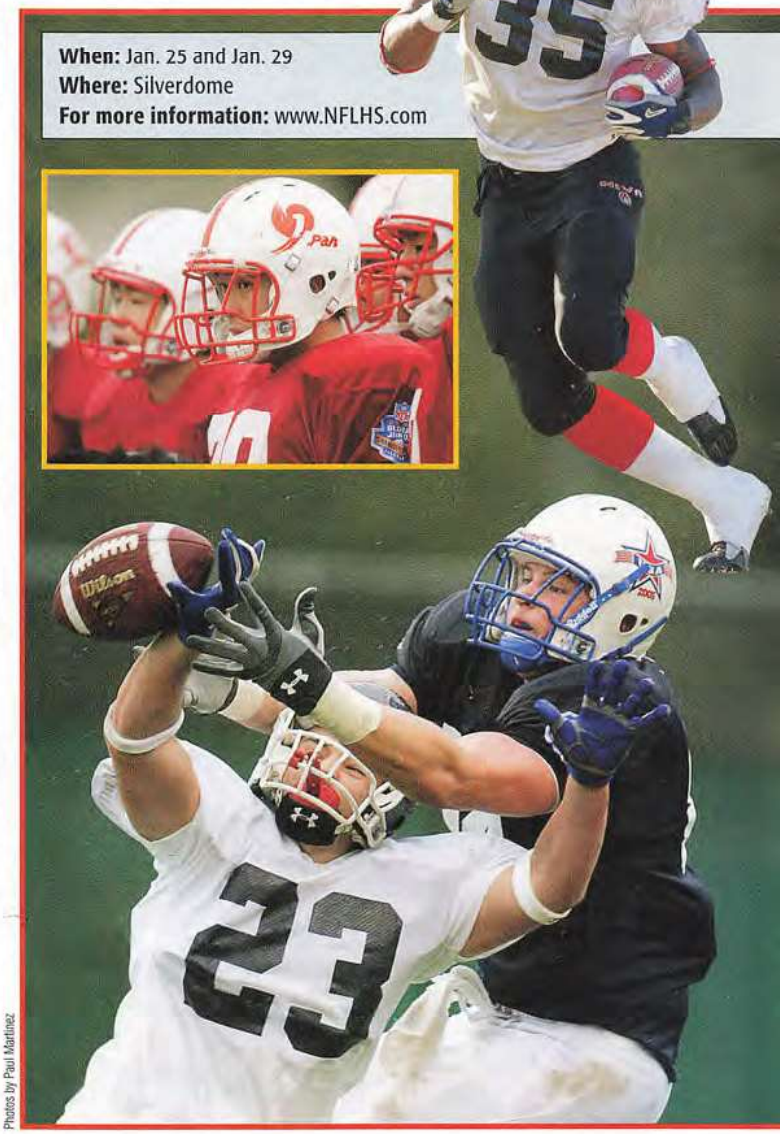
This year's USA all-star team was selected from high schools in 11 counties in northwestern Ohio and is coached by Dick Cromwell of St. Francis De Sales High School in Toledo. Student-athletes needed to post a minimum 3.0 GPA through their junior year to be eligible.

Players on the 36-man NFL Global Junior Championship rosters spend a week living with families of students from local Michigan high schools, including Andover, Lahser, Seaholm, and Notre Dame Prep. Many of them are experiencing the American way of life for the first time.

"This event is a showcase of international football," says organizer Patrick Steenberge. "It's fantastic to see young men from across the globe united by football and competing for a world championship of their own."

The NFL Global Junior Championship has produced an array of talent over the past decade, including Atlanta Falcons defensive end Constantin Ritzmann (of Germany). Fellow GJC alums Marvin Allen (Frankfurt Galaxy/England) and Carl-John Bjork (Amsterdam Admirals/Sweden) made their mark in NFL Europe.

When: Jan. 25 and Jan. 29
Where: Silverdome
For more information: www.NFLHS.com



Photos by Paul Martinez

PROMOTING HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES

One of the NFL's primary community focuses for the 2005 season has been to implement programs promoting the importance of living healthy lifestyles. In the months leading up this year's Super Bowl, the NFL, the Greater Detroit Area Health Council, and other community medical organizations have hosted *40 Days of Fitness*, where they've offered 40 consecutive days of health activities including education, prevention, and health screenings.

The Super Bowl Healthy Family Challenge, on Jan. 29 at the Boll Family YMCA, provides much-needed health testing and wellness information to underserved families in Detroit. The health fair features family workouts by nationally recognized fitness expert Donna Richardson Joyner and activities designed to encourage Detroit residents to get regular checkups, become educated about disease prevention, and incorporate physical fitness and good nutrition in their daily lives.

YOUTH CLINICS

As part of Super Bowl week activities, the NFL Youth Football Department is conducting a series of Youth Clinics throughout Detroit.

More than 3,000 children are participating, invited from local elementary and middle schools, youth football programs, and community youth agencies and organizations. Participants will learn football fundamentals, sportsmanship, and teamwork from NFL players and youth coaches.

The clinics take place Jan. 22 (Lions facility in Allen Park), Jan. 28 (Silverdome), and Feb. 2-4 at the NFL Experience (Cobo Arena).

TOGETHER, THEY'RE BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

On Feb. 3, Rebuilding Together joins with the NFL for *Kickoff To Rebuild 2006* at the Cass Community Activity Center.

Now in its 11th year, Kickoff To Rebuild is a full-day blitz of rehabilitation and renewal in the Super Bowl host city. NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and his wife, Chan, serve as honorary co-chairs for the event.

The Cass Community Activity Center is a nonprofit center that serves as a "home away from home" for more than 60 developmentally disabled adults.

Rebuilding Together is the nation's largest volunteer organization whose mission is to preserve and revitalize low-income houses, non-profit organizations, and communities. To learn more, go to www.rebuildingtogether.org.

On Jan. 25, Habitat for Humanity launched a 10-day *Super Bowl Blitz Build*. Volunteers are building 40 "homes in a box" at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Airport in support of Hurricane Katrina victims.

This is part of Habitat For Humanity's "Operation Home Delivery," which is preparing thousands of prefab homes for delivery to hurricane victims throughout the Gulf Coast.

Courtesy of Rebuilding Together

Paul Tagliabue

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

America's teens are continuing to transform Super Bowl Sunday into the nation's largest youth-led day of giving and service through the *Souper Bowl of Caring*.

On Super Bowl Sunday, thousands of youth volunteers across the country take up local collections for hunger relief, asking for $1 donations. One-hundred percent of the money raised goes directly to local food banks and other charities. Last year's effort was led by more than 11,000 organizations and raised more than $4 million for charity.

Souper Bowl of Caring is at work in all 50 states through church groups, schools, and a variety of service organizations. Now in its 15th year, it has given more than $28 million to neighbors in need. For more information, visit www.souperbowl.org.

TASTE OF THE NFL XV

Taste of the NFL, the premier food and wine-tasting extravaganza that takes place during Super Bowl weekend, is now in its 15th year.

Known as the "Party with a Purpose," the event raises awareness and dollars in the fight against hunger. It pairs a top chef representing each of the NFL's 32 teams with an alumnus or current player from each team.

Attendees may sample culinary specialties, meet the chefs, and get photos and autographs from host players and celebrity guests. The event features a silent auction of sports memorabilia, artwork, vacations, and jewelry. Entertainment follows the main event.

Guest tickets are priced at $400 and VIP tickets (allowing for 6 p.m. entry) cost $600. Corporate tables are available.

Proceeds are being donated to food banks and programs of America's Second Harvest.

When Feb. 4
Time 7 p.m.
Where
Rock Financial Showplace
46100 Grand River, Novi
For more information
(952) 835-7621 / www.tasteofthenfl.com

Thomas E. Dorroghue

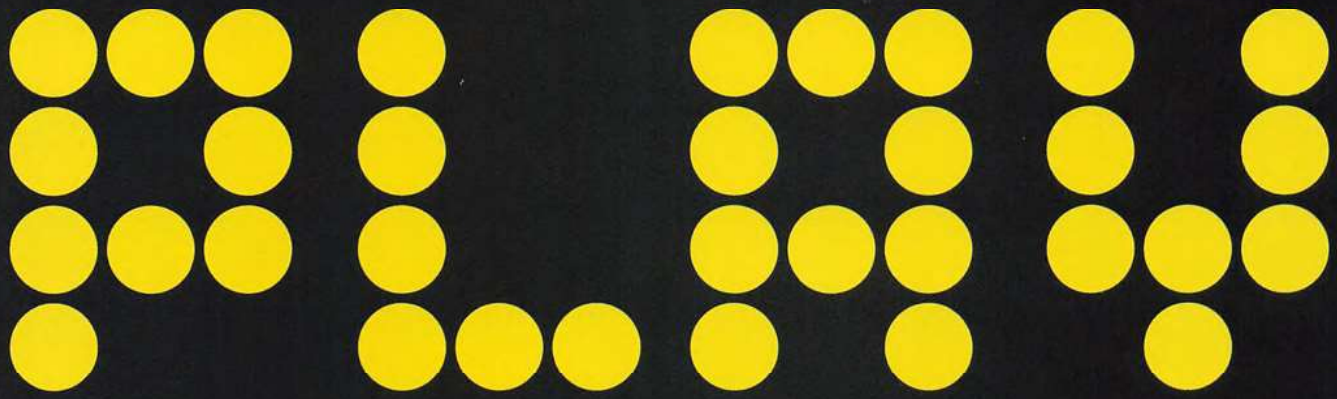
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

NFL.COM FANTASY 2005 GRAND PRIZE WINNERS

Congratulations to Philip J. Achterhof, who finished first in NFL Home Team Challenge 2005, a weekly salary-cap fantasy football game. Achterhof, along with the winner of the league-formatted NFL Fantasy 2005 game, received a VIP trip for two to Detroit for Super Bowl XL.

Be sure to play NFL.com Fantasy next season, and you could win a VIP fantasy trip to Super Bowl XLI in Miami.

NFL FANTASY 2005
NFL CHALLENGE 2005
Play on www.nfl.com



New York Times Sports Magazin

There's a New Player in Town. ●●● It's **Play**, the new sports magazine from The New York Times. Find the **premiere issue** in The Times on **Super Bowl Sunday**, and look for three more issues in 2006.

ADVERTISERS ▸ To know more, or to advertise in the June, August and October issues of Play, contact Rich Colandrea at (212) 556-4613 or colanrj@nytimes.com. Leagues and teams contact Karen List at (212) 556-1099 or listke@nytimes.com.

Pregame. Postgame. None of it matters if you don't

BRING YOUR "A" GAME.

Fig. 1 Hot Dog

Fig. 2 Drumstick

Fig. 3 Cheeseburger

Fig. 4 Corn on the Cob

Fig. 5 Shish Kebab

Fig. 6 Rib Eye

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SUPER WEEK

SUPER BOWL GOSPEL CELEBRATION

The popular *Super Bowl Gospel Celebration*, now in its seventh year, takes place on Feb. 3 at the Masonic Temple of Detroit.

Always among Super Bowl weekend's best-attended events, one can expect an evening of inspirational music, soul-stirring testimonials from NFL players, and surprise guests. The show begins at 7:45 p.m.

This year's celebration features award-winning singing sensation Patti LaBelle, who will share the stage with some of gospel music's hottest performers—The Clark Sisters, Mary Mary, The Winans, and Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Choir.

Tickets are priced at $45-$75 and available at Ticketmaster locations in Detroit, by calling (248) 645-6566, and at ticketmaster.com. A portion of the proceeds from the show are being donated to local charitable causes. For additional information, go to www.superbowlgospelcelebration.com.

Patti LaBelle

Carlo Dalla Chiesa

The Winans

Michael Gomez

The Clark Sisters

Arpiné Turner

SUPER BOWL CONCERT BASH ON FEB. 2

On Feb. 2, the *Pepsi Smash Super Bowl Bash* takes center stage at the State Theatre in Detroit with a concert featuring Kanye West, Nickelback, Train, and the Goo Goo Dolls.

Doors open at 6 p.m. and the show begins at 7 p.m. Visit www.superbowl.com for more information. Portions of the concert are being rebroadcast on VH1 on Feb. 4 at 10 p.m.

NFL NETWORK: COMING TO YOU LIVE FROM DETROIT

NFL Network is taking football fans inside the big game by delivering 60-plus hours of live programming from Detroit during the week of Super Bowl XL.

NFL Total Access airs live from the Marriott Renaissance Center starting on Jan. 29 with its lineup of Terrell Davis, Rich Eisen, Kara Henderson, Derrin Horton, Lincoln Kennedy, Jim Mora, Adam Schefter, and Rod Woodson.

Playbook is coming from the Cobo Center—home of the NFL Experience—on Feb. 1-4 with host Paul Burmeister and analysts Sterling Sharpe, Solomon Wilcots, Butch Davis, and Brian Baldinger.

In addition, every NFL-related press conference is being shown live, including team arrivals, player availability, head coach press conferences, Commissioner Paul Tagliabue's Super Bowl press conference, Hall of Fame announcement, and the Man of the Year Award.

On Super Bowl Sunday, NFL Network delivers a 6½-hour pregame show with members of the *Total Access* team along with a two-hour postgame show, both live from Ford Field.

(l to r): Rod Woodson, Lincoln Kennedy, Rich Eisen, and Terrell Davis.

Courtesy of NFL Network

NFL CHARITIES EFFORTS

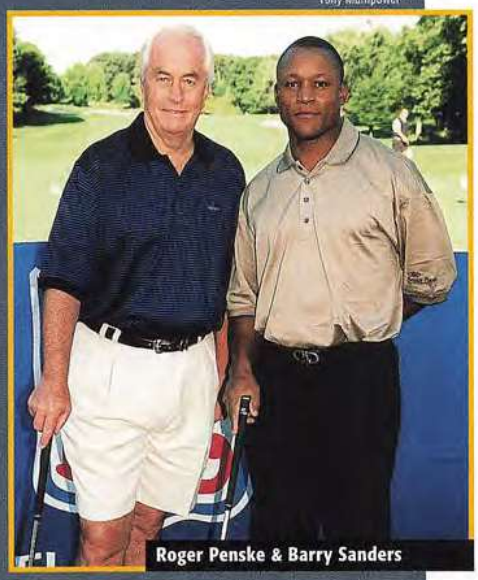
NFL Charities Golf...

The National Football League held its 22nd annual Super Bowl *NFL Charities Golf Classic* on Sept. 9, at Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

Roger Penske, chairman of the Detroit Super Bowl XL Host Committee, and Pro Football Hall of Famer Barry Sanders joined with other celebrities to captain teams of amateur golfers in the event that benefited the NFL's Youth Education Town (YET) initiative. The event raised more than $80,000 for this cause.

For information on next year's NFL Charities Golf Classic, contact tournament director Nick Nicolosi at (201) 489-0049.

Tony Mumpower


Roger Penske & Barry Sanders

...And Bowling

On Feb. 4, the first- ever *Super Bowl NFL Charities Bowling Classic* takes place, benefiting the YET Initiative. The event, at the Super Bowl Lanes in Canton and sponsored by the United States Bowling Congress, is scheduled to run from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Hall of Famers Willie Lanier and Eric Dickerson, current NFL stars, other area pro athletes, and celebrities from the entertainment world are expected to be among the 300 bowlers competing. The event hopes to raise more than $200,000.

To learn more, call (734) 464-8500.

TV AND RADIO

SUPER BOWL XL BEING TELEVISED BY ABC SPORTS

ABC Sports presents live high definition coverage of Super Bowl XL with the broadcast team of Al Michaels and John Madden along with sideline reporters Michele Tafoya and Suzy Kolber.

The historic 40th Super Bowl will be ABC Sports' seventh presentation of the biggest game in American sports.

ABC's *Super Bowl XL Pregame Show* airs live at 2:30p.m. ET from Ford Field. Chris Berman, the host of ESPN's *Sunday NFL Countdown* and *NFL PrimeTime*, will host the show with analysts Michael Irvin, Tom Jackson and Steve Young. ESPN also will air a six-hour Super Bowl pregame edition of *Sunday NFL Countdown* beginning at 11a.m.

The Emmy-Award winning Michaels has been the voice of *Monday Night Football* for 20 years. He is the only commentator to either call the play-by-play or host the four major professional sports championships—Super Bowl, NBA Finals, Stanley Cup Finals, and World Series—on national television.

Madden, winner of 14 Emmy Awards, is in his fourth year on *MNF*. Michaels and Madden are calling their second Super Bowl together (sixth overall for Michaels; 10th for Madden).

George Bodenheimer is ESPN and ABC Sports President and co-chairman of Disney Media Networks. Norby Williamson is Executive Vice President of Studio and Remote Production. Mike Pearl is Senior Vice President and Executive Producer of ABC Sports. Fred Gaudelli will produce and Drew Esocoff will direct the Super Bowl game coverage. The pregame, halftime, and postgame will be produced by ESPN Senior Coordinating Producer John Dahl.

Craig Sjodin/ABC

Al Michaels and John Madden call the action for ABC.

WORLDWIDE COVERAGE

Televisions all around the world will be tuned to Super Bowl XL as 52 international broadcasters will televise the game to 233 countries and territories in 32 languages.

Super Bowl XL is expected to be available to a worldwide audience estimated between 750 million and one billion people. There are 18 television and radio stations from 12 countries broadcasting the game on site.

For the first time, the Super Bowl will be broadcast live on free television in France when France Television 2 airs the action from Detroit. Similarly, Germany's most-watched station, ARD, will be showing the Super Bowl live for the first time, while Europe's largest commercial network, ITV, airs its second Super Bowl in the UK.

NFL International is providing a world feed for all international broadcast partners for the fifth straight year. English-speaking countries showing the game will hear FOX's Dick Stockton and Daryl Johnston call the action.

SuperBowl.com will cybercast the Super Bowl in five languages. The site is taking the feed from broadcasts in French, Russian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish and streaming the audio, allowing fans from around the world to listen to the game on their computers.

SUPER BOWL XL ON WESTWOOD ONE RADIO SPORTS

For the 19th consecutive year and 33rd time overall, Westwood One is the exclusive network radio home of the Super Bowl.

More than 550 radio stations across America will carry the broadcast of Super Bowl XL from Detroit. Additionally, the Westwood One broadcast can be heard in nearly 200 foreign countries and on more than 200 ships at sea via the American Forces Radio Network.

The *Monday Night Football* broadcast team of Marv Albert and Boomer Esiason call their fourth Super Bowl together for Westwood One. John Dockery and Bonnie Bernstein patrol the Ford Field sidelines, while Jim Gray hosts the pregame, halftime, and postgame shows. Howard Deneroff is coordinating producer of Super Bowl XL on Westwood One.

Westwood One is the leader in radio play-by-play sports. Its other sports programming includes: Notre Dame football; NCAA football and basketball, including the Final Four; the NHL, including the Stanley Cup Finals; the Olympics; and the Masters.

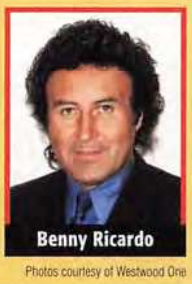
Boomer Esiason and Marv Albert

SB XL EN ESPAÑOL

Super Bowl XL will also be broadcast domestically to a national Spanish-speaking audience by Westwood One.

For the third straight year and seventh time overall, Armando Quintero handles play-by-play duties while former NFL placekicker Benny Ricardo provides color commentary.

Armando Quintero



Benny Ricardo

Photos courtesy of Westwood One

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The Super Bowl XL Motown-Themed Pregame Show is headlined by legend Stevie Wonder.

Stevie Wonder has stood among the world's most profound and influential artists for more than four decades. The winner of 21 Grammy Awards and the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, the Detroit native has sold more than 70 million records and has nearly three dozen Top Ten hits.

In October, Wonder released *A Time To Love*, with 15 new songs and featuring collaborations with India.Arie, gospel star Kim Burrell, his daughter Aisha Morris, and Paul McCartney. Wonder is nominated for six Grammy Awards this year, including five for *A Time To Love*.

The disc continues Wonder's dialogue with music fans who have come to rely on his spirited optimism. "The time is right again for this kind of conversation," he says. "And we're talking about all forms of love. Love for a significant other. Love for a spouse, for your brother or sister, for humankind. The love of your faith. Whatever your passion is, this project was made with every level of love in mind."

Among the tracks is the uplifting "Shelter In The Rain." Specially released to Christian and Gospel radio stations, net proceeds from the single are going to Stevie's charity organization, The Wonder Foundation, with donations earmarked for Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

Wonder's blending of innovative beats and lyrical sensibilities helped revitalize American songwriting in the 1970s with recordings that changed music forever, including *Talking Book*, *Innervisions*, *Fullfillingness' First Finale*, and *Songs In The Key Of Life*. His litany of hits, from "Superstition," "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life," and "Living In The City," to "Higher Ground," "You Haven't Done Nothin'," and "Sir Duke" affirmed his status as an American treasure.

Wonder's hit-making journey continued in the ensuing decades. It includes the 1982 collaboration with McCartney, "Ebony And Ivory," and 1984's *The Woman In Red* soundtrack, which produced "I Just Called To Say I Love You," a No. 1 hit that netted Wonder an Academy Award.

The 1990s brought new opportunities with Wonder's impact on hip-hop artists evident when Coolio fused "Pastime Paradise" for his 1995 smash "Gangsta's Paradise." Countless more stars from this genre would pay homage, including Public Enemy and Jay-Z.

Wonder was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1989 and entered the Songwriter's Hall of Fame in 2002. Two years later, he received the *Billboard* Century Award, the publication's highest honor for creative achievement.

A tireless humanitarian and champion for political and social justice, Wonder was the preeminent force behind the Martin Luther King holiday and USA For Africa, as well as helping to raise awareness about the AIDS epidemic and the scourge of apartheid in South Africa.

Stevie Wonder's blending of innovative beats and lyrical sensibilities helped revitalize American songwriting.

Kevin Winter/Getty Images

...AND FESTIVITIES

John Legend

Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage.com

JOHN LEGEND

With eight Grammy nominations ranging from Song of the Year ("Ordinary People") to Best R&B album (*Get Lifted*), John Legend has shown the rare ability to fuse the "feel" and vibe of classic old school soul music with the edgy flavor of 21st century hip hop. In addition to his solo efforts, Legend has worked with Kanye West (co-writing, singing and playing piano on the disc *College Dropout*), Alicia Keys, and the Black Eyed Peas.

JOSS STONE

English singer Joss Stone was just 16 when she emerged on the pop/rock scene in 2003. The sun-kissed blonde, who grew up listening to American soul and R&B, immediately wowed critics with a voice that R&B/soul pioneer Betty Wright has called a "God-given gift." Her debut disc, *The Soul Sessions*, sold more than two million copies and her most recent release is *Mind, Body & Soul*, which has 11 tracks written or co-written by Stone.

Joss Stone

Courtesy of the UK

COIN FLIP GIVES XL AN "MVP" DIMENSION

The NFL will honor the brightest stars of America's biggest game in a special Super Bowl XL pregame coin toss ceremony. The league is presenting the Super Bowl's Most Valuable Players on the field as part of its celebration of the game's 40th anniversary. Super Bowl MVPs receive the Pete Rozelle Trophy, named in honor of the former NFL commissioner.

Among those expected in attendance are the MVPs of Super Bowl I (Bart Starr), Super Bowl X (Lynn Swann), Super Bowl XX (Richard Dent), and Super Bowl XXX (Larry Brown). Starr and Swann also are members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The two-tone commemorative flip coin is silver with 24kt gold highlights and is minted by The Highland Mint Company. The coin features the Super Bowl XL logo on one side and the Lombardi Trophy and competing team logos on the other side.

Lynn Swann

Kevin C. Cox/WireImage.com

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Legends from two musical hotbeds join together for the national anthem at Super Bowl XL as Detroit's Aretha Franklin performs with New Orleans natives Aaron Neville and Dr. John. The inclusion of Neville and Dr. John reflect the NFL's on-going commitment to the rebuilding process of the Gulf Coast region.

Franklin, the "Queen of Soul," began her singing career at Detroit's New Bethel Baptist Church and by the end of the 1960s was among the music world's top-selling stars, blending aspects of pop, gospel, and R&B into her songs. Her popularity carries on to this day, which accounts for her 20 No. 1 hits, 18 Grammy Awards, and induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Neville, who sang the anthem prior to Super Bowl XXIV, has had hit records (among them the No. 1 "Tell It Like It Is") and acclaimed albums, including the Neville Brothers' *Yellow Moon*, released in 1989. He's won four Grammys and twice been named best male singer in the *Rolling Stone* critics' poll.

Dr. John's dry crackle stands as one of the most distinctive sounds in jazz and popular music. He's won Grammys for his 1989 remake of "Makin' Whoopee" with Rickie Lee Jones and in 1992 for the album *Going Back to New Orleans*.

Aretha Franklin

Monica Morgan/WireImage.com

Aaron Neville

Rich Pilling/Getty Images

Dr. John

Chris Graythen/Getty Images

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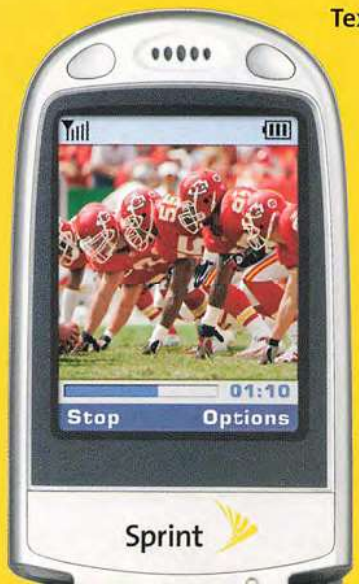

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HALFTIME SHOW

The Rolling Stones have represented not just the music of the past two generations, but the generations themselves.

One of the world's most electrifying and legendary live bands, the Rolling Stones, headline the *Sprint Super Bowl XL Halftime Show*. The show is being produced by Don Mischer Productions.

"We are excited to welcome one of the greatest rock 'n' roll bands in history to the Super Bowl," says Steve Bornstein, the NFL's executive vice president of media and president and CEO of NFL Network. "As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Super Bowl, it is fitting that we work with the Rolling Stones, whose music has thrilled audiences around the world for years."

In many ways, the Rolling Stones—Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Ron Wood, and Charlie Watts—have represented not just the music of the past two generations, but the generations themselves. And with the 2005 release of *A Bigger Bang*, the Stones continue to be an indomitable force on the music scene. The critically-acclaimed album, a wide-ranging collection of hard-hitting, high-powered rock and blues songs, has been nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Rock Album.

The Rolling Stones' "A Bigger Bang" world tour has rolled through North America to sold-out crowds since opening in Boston last summer. Critics have praised the performances for their exuberance and sheer excitement that continue to characterize the live Rolling Stones experience. In May, the Stones will embark on a European tour, playing more than 30 concerts in nearly two dozen countries.

The Rolling Stones formed in London in 1962 and their sound quickly connected with a young and growing audience in the United States. They became synonymous with the rebellious attitude of that era and their early releases—*Beggars Banquet* (1968), *Let It Bleed* (1969), *Sticky Fingers* (1971), and *Exile on Main Street* (1972)—routinely turn up on lists of the greatest albums of all time.

Their 1978 release *Some Girls*, their best-selling album, combined elements of punk ("When the Whip Comes Down") and disco ("Miss You"), while 1981's *Tattoo You* added the classics "Start Me Up" and "Waiting on a Friend" to the Stones' repertoire.

They released *Steel Wheels* in 1989—the same year they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. More recent albums have included *Voodoo Lounge* (1994), the live *Stripped* (1995), *Bridges to Babylon* (1997), and the hits collection *Forty Licks* (2002).

Above all else, the Rolling Stones have set the standard for live performance; they own the record for the top two most-attended North American tours ever. Look for that trademark energy to again be on display at Super Bowl XL.

Emmy-Award winning Don Mischer is working with the NFL at the Super Bowl for the third time. Most recently, he produced last year's halftime show featuring Paul McCartney.

The Rolling Stones: Charlie Watts, Keith Richards, Mick Jagger, and Ron Wood

PREGAME AND HALFTIME PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive Producer Don Mischer
Producer Charlie Haykel
Directed By Don Mischer
Line Producers Eric Cook, Bill Urban
Co-Producer Juliane Hare
Production Designers Mark Fisher, Ray Winkler
Lighting Designers Robert Dickinson, Patrick Woodroffe, Bob Barnhart
Pregame Music Director Steve Jordan
Associate Producers Mark Leed, Robert Norris
Talent Executive David Paley
Art Director Anne Brahic
Field Cast Choreographer Kristen Patterson Terry
Staging Supervisors Tony Hauser, Cap Spence
Engineer In Charge Bob Muller
Head Rigger Rocky Paulson
Associate Directors Gregg Gelfand, Jennifer Mischer
Production Supervisor Augie Max Vargas
Production Coordinators Arianne Shean, Hilary Gladstein, Aaron Cooke, Jesse Leed, Christopher Vasquez
Field Cast Procurement Adam Siegel
Stage Managers Gary Natoli, Jeffry Gitter, Harve Levine, Arthur Lewis, Vince Poxon, Karen Tasch Weiss
Assistant To The Executive Producer Jason Uhrmacher

The Pregame and Halftime shows are NFL Network productions.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSING	Comp-Att	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Rtng
Matt Hasselbeck	294-449	65.5	3459	24	9	98.2
Seneca Wallace	13-25	52.0	173	1	1	70.9

RUSHING	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Shaun Alexander	370	1880	5.1	88	27
Maurice Morris	71	288	4.1	49	1
Matt Hasselbeck	36	124	3.4	23	1
Leonard Weaver	17	80	4.7	24	0
Mack Strong	17	78	4.6	16	0

RECEIVING	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Bobby Engram	67	778	11.6	56	3
Joe Jurevicius	55	694	12.6	52	10
Jerramy Stevens	45	554	12.3	35	5
Darrell Jackson	38	482	12.7	48	3
D.J. Hackett	28	400	14.3	47	2
Mack Strong	22	166	7.5	27	0
Shaun Alexander	15	78	5.2	9	1

TACKLES	Tackles	Assists	Total	Sacks	FR
Lofa Tatupu	85	19	104	4.0	1
Jordan Babineaux	61	13	74	0.0	1
Michael Boulware	58	15	73	2.0	0
Leroy Hill	51	21	72	7.5	0
Marquand Manuel	58	13	71	0.0	1
Marcus Trufant	55	9	64	1.0	0
D.D. Lewis	45	17	62	0.0	0
Kelly Herndon	50	4	54	0.0	0
Grant Wistrom	41	11	52	4.0	0
Rocky Bernard	42	10	52	8.5	2
Bryce Fisher	34	13	47	9.0	0
Marcus Tubbs	27	13	40	5.5	1

INTERCEPTIONS	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Michael Boulware	4	107	26.8	40	0
Jordan Babineaux	3	56	18.7	25	0
Lofa Tatupu	3	55	18.3	38	1
Kelly Herndon	2	12	6.0	10	0
Jimmy Williams	2	6	3.0	6	0

KICKOFF RETURNS	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Josh Scobey	59	1326	22.5	53	0

PUNT RETURNS	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Jimmy Williams	24	139	5.8	24	0

PUNTING	No	Avg	Net	In/20	Long
Tom Rouen	61	41.6	35.0	20	62

FIELD GOALS	Total	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Josh Brown	18/25	0/0	5/5	4/5	4/7	5/8

STARTERS – OFFENSE

No	Player	Pos
84	Bobby Engram	WR
71	Walter Jones	LT
76	Steve Hutchinson	LG
61	Robbie Tobeck	C
62	Chris Gray	RG
75	Sean Locklear	RT
86	Jerramy Stevens	TE
82	Darrell Jackson	WR
8	Matt Hasselbeck	QB
37	Shaun Alexander	RB
38	Mack Strong	FB

STARTERS – DEFENSE

No	Player	Pos
94	Bryce Fisher	DE
91	Chuck Darby	DT
90	Marcus Tubbs	DT
98	Grant Wistrom	DE
56	Leroy Hill	LB
51	Lofa Tatupu	LB
54	D.D. Lewis	LB
31	Kelly Herndon	CB
23	Marcus Trufant	CB
28	Michael Boulware	SS
33	Marquand Manuel	FS

NUMERICAL ROSTER

No	Player	Pos
3	Josh Brown	K
8	Matt Hasselbeck	QB
11	David Greene	QB
15	Seneca Wallace	QB
16	Tom Rouen	P
18	D.J. Hackett	WR
20	Maurice Morris	RB
21	Andre Dyson	CB
22	Jimmy Williams	CB
23	Marcus Trufant	CB
25	Michael Harden	CB
27	Jordan Babineaux	CB
28	Michael Boulware	SS
31	Kelly Herndon	CB
33	Marquand Manuel	FS
35	Etric Pruitt	FS
37	Shaun Alexander	RB
38	Mack Strong	FB
39	Josh Scobey	RB
43	Leonard Weaver	FB
50	Cornelius Wortham	LB
51	Lofa Tatupu	LB
52	Jean-Philippe Darche	LS
53	Niko Koutouvides	LB
54	D.D. Lewis	LB
56	Leroy Hill	LB
57	Kevin Bentley	LB
58	Isaiah Kacyvenski	LB
61	Robbie Tobeck	C
62	Chris Gray	G
65	Chris Spencer	C
69	Joe Tafoya	DE
71	Walter Jones	T
73	Wayne Hunter	T
74	Ray Willis	T
75	Sean Locklear	T
76	Steve Hutchinson	G
77	Floyd Womack	T/G
78	Robert Pollard	DE
81	Peter Warrick	WR
82	Darrell Jackson	WR
83	Ryan Hannam	TE
84	Bobby Engram	WR
86	Jerramy Stevens	TE
87	Joe Jurevicius	WR
88	Itula Mili	TE
90	Marcus Tubbs	DT
91	Chuck Darby	DT
93	Craig Terrill	DT
94	Bryce Fisher	DE
95	Rodney Bailey	DT
98	Grant Wistrom	DE
99	Rocky Bernard	DT

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

STARTERS – OFFENSE

No	Player	Pos
82	Antwaan Randle El	WR
77	Marvel Smith	LT
66	Alan Faneca	LG
64	Jeff Hartings	C
73	Kendall Simmons	RG
78	Max Starks	RT
83	Heath Miller	TE
86	Hines Ward	WR
7	Ben Roethlisberger	QB
39	Willie Parker	RB
35	Dan Kreider	FB

STARTERS – DEFENSE

No	Player	Pos
91	Aaron Smith	DE
98	Casey Hampton	NT
67	Kimo von Oelhoffen	DE
53	Clark Haggans	LB
51	James Farrior	LB
50	Larry Foote	LB
55	Joey Porter	LB
24	Ike Taylor	CB
26	Deshea Townsend	CB
43	Troy Polamalu	SS
28	Chris Hope	FS

NUMERICAL ROSTER

No	Player	Pos
3	Jeff Reed	K
7	Ben Roethlisberger	QB
8	Tommy Maddox	QB
16	Charlie Batch	QB
17	Chris Gardocki	P
20	Bryant McFadden	CB
21	Ricardo Colclough	CB
22	Duce Staley	RB
23	Tyrone Carter	S
24	Ike Taylor	CB
26	Deshea Townsend	CB
27	Willie Williams	CB
28	Chris Hope	S
29	Chidi Iwuoma	CB
31	Mike Logan	S
34	Verron Haynes	RB
35	Dan Kreider	FB
36	Jerome Bettis	RB
39	Willie Parker	RB
43	Troy Polamalu	S
50	Larry Foote	LB
51	James Farrior	LB
53	Clark Haggans	LB
54	Rian Wallace	LB
55	Joey Porter	LB
56	Chukky Okobi	C
57	Clint Kriewaldt	LB
60	Greg Warren	LS
64	Jeff Hartings	C
66	Alan Faneca	G
67	Kimo von Oelhoffen	DE
68	Chris Kemoeatu	G
72	Barrett Brooks	T
73	Kendall Simmons	G
76	Chris Hoke	DT
77	Marvel Smith	T
78	Max Starks	T
79	Trai Essex	T
80	Cedrick Wilson	WR
81	Sean Morey	WR
82	Antwaan Randle El	WR
83	Heath Miller	TE
84	Jerame Tuman	TE
85	Nate Washington	WR
86	Hines Ward	WR
89	Lee Mays	WR
90	Travis Kirschke	DE
91	Aaron Smith	DE
92	James Harrison	LB
94	Andre Frazier	LB
96	Shaun Nua	DE
98	Casey Hampton	DT
99	Brett Keisel	DE

STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSING	Comp-Att	Pct	Yds	TD	Int	Rtng
Ben Roethlisberger	168-268	62.7	2385	17	9	98.6
Tommy Maddox	34-71	47.9	406	2	4	51.7
Charlie Batch	23-36	63.9	246	1	1	81.5

RUSHING	Att	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Willie Parker	255	1202	4.7	80	4
Jerome Bettis	110	368	3.3	39	9
Verron Haynes	74	274	3.7	20	3
Duce Staley	38	148	3.9	17	1
Antwaan Randle El	12	73	6.1	43	0
Ben Roethlisberger	31	69	2.2	13	3

RECEIVING	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Hines Ward	69	975	14.1	85	11
Heath Miller	39	459	11.8	50	6
Antwaan Randle El	35	558	15.9	63	1
Cedrick Wilson	26	451	17.3	46	0
Willie Parker	18	218	12.1	48	1
Verron Haynes	11	113	10.3	18	0

TACKLES	Tackles	Assists	Total	Sacks	FR
Larry Foote	96	27	123	3.0	1
James Farrior	84	29	113	2.0	1
Troy Polamalu	84	16	100	3.0	3
Chris Hope	70	27	97	0.0	1
Ike Taylor	72	24	96	0.0	2
Joey Porter	46	15	61	10.5	1
Clark Haggans	41	19	60	9.0	0
Aaron Smith	45	10	55	2.0	1
Deshea Townsend	43	12	55	3.0	1
Casey Hampton	24	19	43	0.0	0
Kimo von Oelhoffen	27	13	40	3.5	0

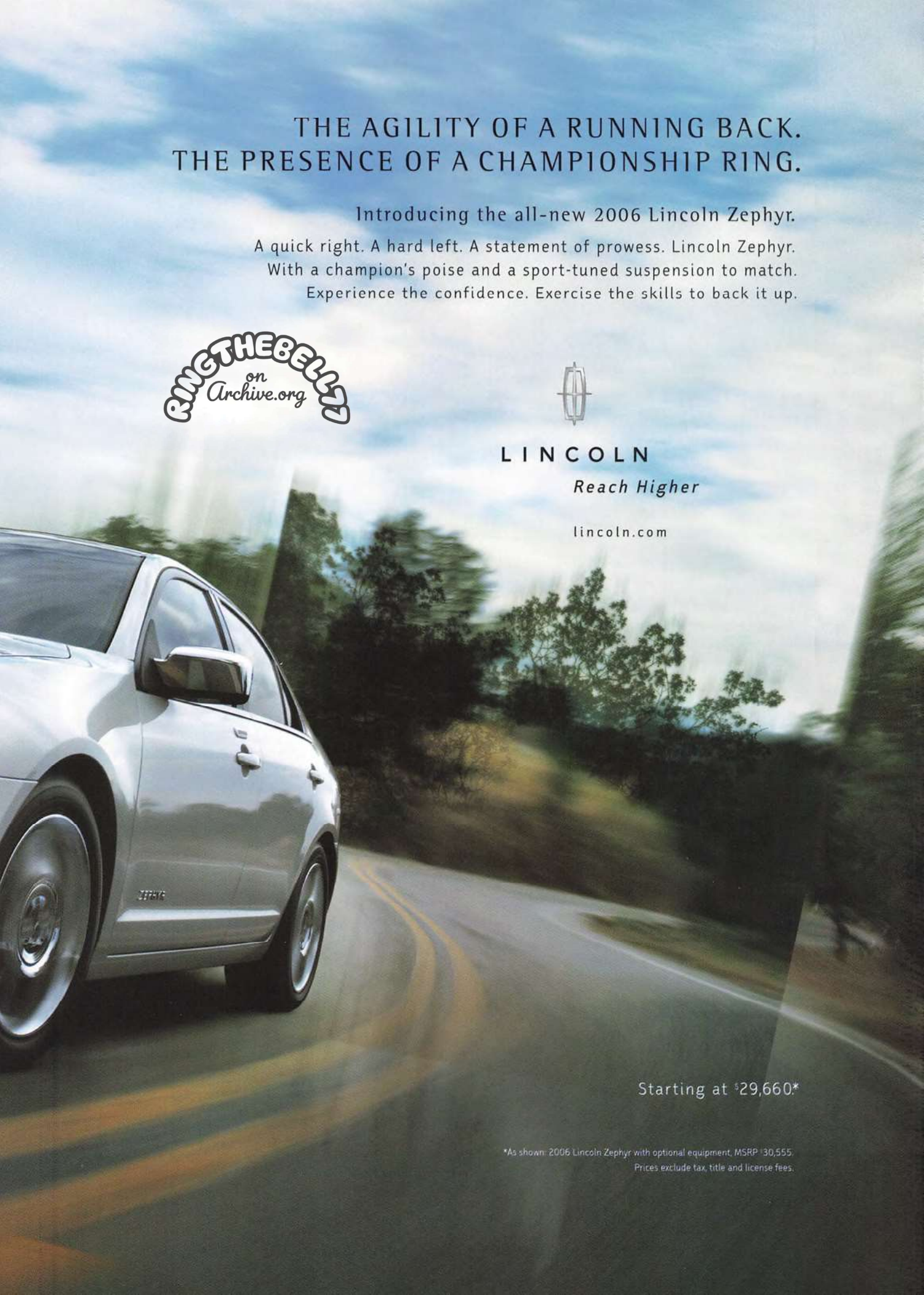
INTERCEPTIONS	No	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Chris Hope	3	60	20.0	55	0
Deshea Townsend	2	26	13.0	26	0
Troy Polamalu	2	42	21.0	36	0
Joey Porter	2	9	4.5	9	0

KICKOFF RETURNS	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Quincy Morgan	23	583	25.3	74	0
Ricardo Colclough	22	473	21.5	63	0

PUNT RETURNS	Ret	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Antwaan Randle El	44	448	10.2	81	2

PUNTING	No	Avg	Net	In/20	Long
Chris Gardocki	67	41.8	34.7	22	65

FIELD GOALS	Total	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Jeff Reed	24/29	0/0	9/9	9/9	6/9	0/2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PITTSBURGH STEELERS

IN 2004, YOU HAD TO ADMIRE THE PITTSBURGH STEELERS FOR THEIR DOMINANCE. THEY CRUISED THROUGH THE REGULAR SEASON WITH A FRANCHISE-BEST 15-1 RECORD, PUNCTUATED BY A 14-0 FINISH, AND WERE THE AFC'S TOP PLAYOFF SEED. ONLY A YEAR LATER, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT RESPECT THEM FOR THEIR RESILIENCE.

Last season's impressive run ended with a bitterly disappointing home loss to the eventual Super Bowl champion Patriots in the AFC Championship Game. So much for being No. 1.

This year, in becoming the first No. 6 seed ever to reach the Super Bowl, the Steelers defied enormous odds by winning three postseason games on the road to earn their first crack at the Vince Lombardi Trophy in a decade. And none is likely to be remembered more than their stunning divisional-round upset of the Colts, the AFC South champions who seemed on the fast track to Super Bowl XL.

The Steelers had built a comfortable 21-3 fourth-quarter lead, but watched in horror as it all but vanished thanks in part to a controversial replay reversal of an interception by strong safety Troy Polamalu. They cringed again with just over a minute left when a fumble by Jerome Bettis—seemingly on his way to a game-sealing touchdown—was nearly returned by Indianapolis for a go-ahead score. And they still weren't assured of victory until Mike Vanderjagt missed badly on his 46-yard field-goal attempt in the final seconds.

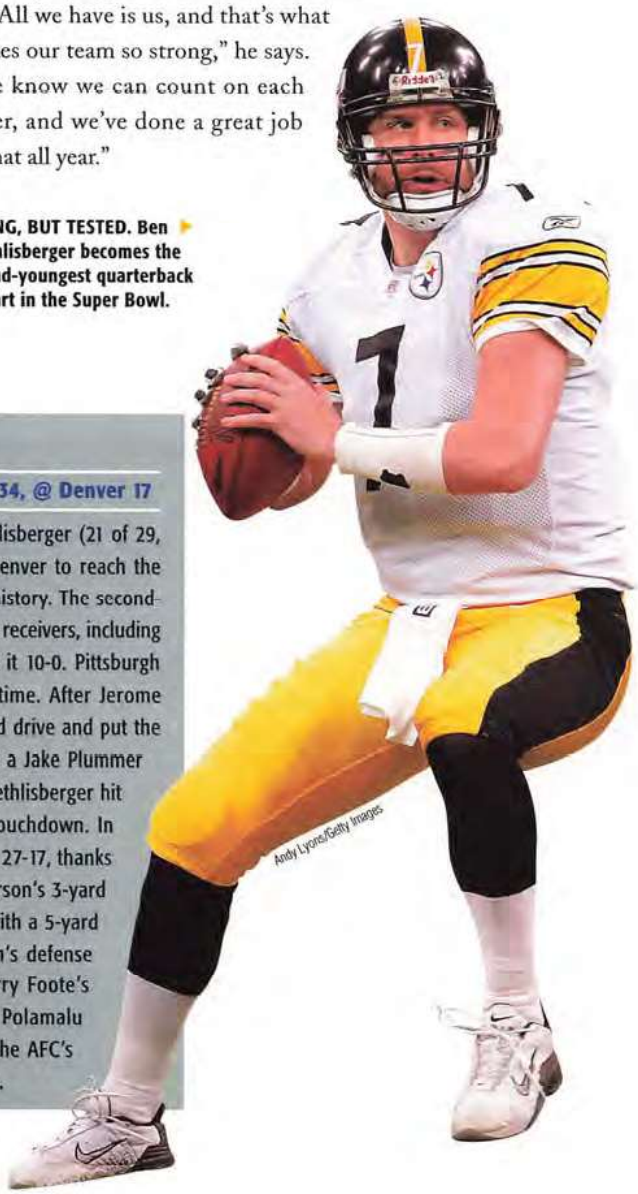
"Only in football can you go from that all-time high to that all-time low and back to that all-time high," says wide receiver Hines Ward, who led Pittsburgh this season with 69 catches and 11 TDs.

In some ways, the Steelers' emotional roller-coaster ride has been appropriate, given that very little has come easy for them in 2005. Yet that's exactly what has made them a more hardened group than a year ago and a big reason why they're in Detroit as the AFC champs.

Take quarterback Ben Roethlisberger. In 2004, he was enjoying a charmed existence as a rookie thrust into the spotlight after replacing injured Tommy Maddox and becoming an instant star. Now, he carries a massive chip on his shoulder. As Steelers players made their way into the visitor's locker room at the RCA Dome after beating the Colts, Roethlisberger joined several of his teammates in chiding reporters who stood outside the door for being "non-believers."

And, like many of his teammates, he relishes the hostile environment of playing in another team's stadium.

"All we have is us, and that's what makes our team so strong," he says. "We know we can count on each other, and we've done a great job of that all year."



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

YOUNG, BUT TESTED. Ben Roethlisberger becomes the second-youngest quarterback to start in the Super Bowl.

2005 RESULTS (14-5)

Opponent	Score	W/L
Tennessee	34-7	W
@ Houston	24-7	W
New England	20-23	L
@ San Diego	24-22	W
Jacksonville	(OT) 17-23	L
@ Cincinnati	27-13	W
Baltimore	20-19	W
@ Green Bay	20-10	W
Cleveland	34-21	W
@ Baltimore	(OT) 13-16	L
@ Indianapolis	7-26	L
Cincinnati	31-38	L
Chicago	21-9	W
@ Minnesota	18-3	W
@ Cleveland	41-0	W
Detroit	35-21	W
Playoffs		
@ Cincinnati	31-17	W
@ Indianapolis	21-18	W
@ Denver	34-17	W

AFC Championship Game – Pittsburgh 34, @ Denver 17

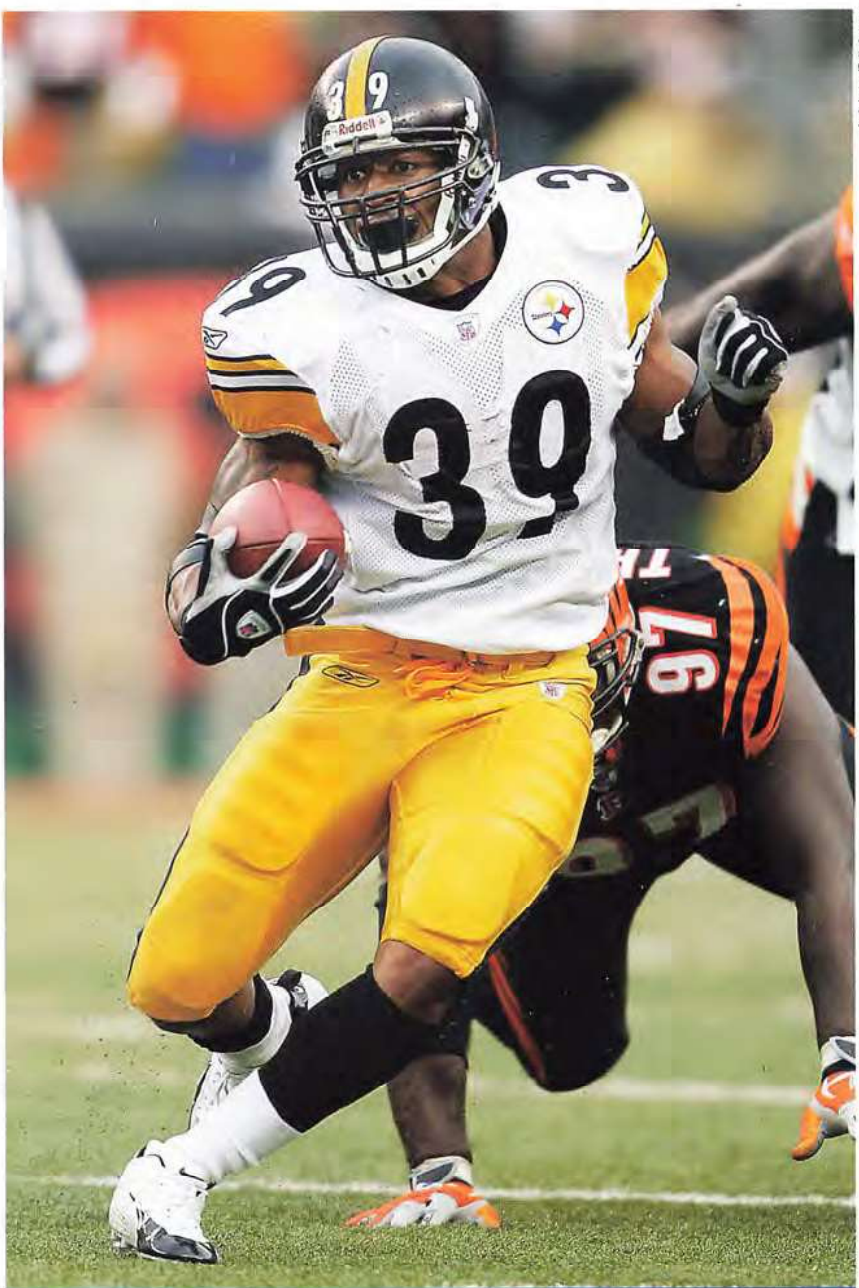
Behind an outstanding effort by Ben Roethlisberger (21 of 29, 275 yards, 2 TDs), the Steelers defeated Denver to reach the Super Bowl for the sixth time in franchise history. The second-year QB completed passes to seven different receivers, including Cedrick Wilson, whose 12-yard grab made it 10-0. Pittsburgh took control of the game just before halftime. After Jerome Bettis' 3-yard run capped a 14-play, 80-yard drive and put the Steelers ahead, 17-3, Ike Taylor intercepted a Jake Plummer pass at the Denver 38. Four plays later, Roethlisberger hit Hines Ward for a back-breaking 17-yard touchdown. In the second half, the Broncos did pull within 27-17, thanks to an Ashley Lelie TD catch and Mike Anderson's 3-yard scoring run, but Roethlisberger answered with a 5-yard TD scamper for the final points. Pittsburgh's defense forced four turnovers and was led by Larry Foote's seven tackles and one interception. Troy Polamalu had six tackles for the Steelers, who beat the AFC's top three seeds during their Super Bowl run.

AFC Champion

Head coach Bill Cowher merits a great deal of credit for the team's ability to maintain its focus through good times and bad. Having lost in three AFC title games since last guiding the Steelers to the Super Bowl (following the 1995 season), he refused to begin celebrating the win over the Colts until after he saw Vanderjagt's field-goal try sail wide right.

Cowher also refused to call that, or any playoff win, the most special of his 14 years at the Steelers' helm.

"Hopefully," he said, "it's yet to come."



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

▲ MOVING FAST. The speedy Willie Parker gained more than 1,200 yards during the regular season. In the AFC Championship Game, he rushed for 35 yards and caught three passes.

Offense

The Steelers leave little guesswork to what they're going to do on offense—run the football, wear down their opponent's defensive line, control the clock, and keep their adversary's best offensive weapons idle on the sidelines.

Willie Parker gets the majority of carries, and his explosiveness and outside speed put a lot of pressure on the defense. Parker has shown excellent development as a cutback runner and has impressive acceleration through the hole. He had five 100-yard rushing games during the regular season and finished seventh in the AFC in rushing with 1,202 yards, averaging 4.7 yards per carry. Parker produced the sixth-highest rushing output in Steelers history and the most yards since Bettis gained 1,341 in 2000.

Bettis, in his 13th and perhaps final NFL season, remains one of the league's most effective inside runners, especially in short yardage and goal-line situations. He scored nine times on the year. Super Bowl Sunday could be an emotional day for him as it's being played in his hometown of Detroit.

With another year of experience, Roethlisberger has become increasingly efficient in his decision-making and is keeping mistakes to a minimum. Despite missing four regular-season games with a knee injury, he completed 62.7 percent of his passes for 2,385 yards with 17 TDs and nine interceptions. He finished with the NFL's third-best passer rating at 98.6. When the Steelers are able to run the ball and control the tempo, Roethlisberger is much more effective throwing short touch passes than he is when the team is trying to rally and the opposition is expecting the pass.

Ward, the Steelers' No. 1 receiver, is a disciplined route runner who changes direction quickly and constantly finds the soft spots in zone coverage. He likes to use double moves—which serve him well in single coverage—and will set up defensive backs with head fakes as often as with his exceptionally quick feet.

Outside of Ward, rookie tight end Heath Miller (39 catches) is Pittsburgh's most consistent receiving threat. Miller is a solid athlete with good speed who can get down the middle of the field. During the first half of the season, the Steelers' first-round draft pick caught six TD passes. No tight end in NFL history had a more productive start. Antwaan Randle El and Cedrick Wilson have taken turns stepping up as the No. 2 wideout. Wilson had five catches in the AFC title game.

The Steelers' run game forces the safeties into the box more often than a defense would like, and these play-action opportunities versus single coverage will set the stage for some big plays if Roethlisberger picks his spots correctly.

Led by left guard Alan Faneca and center Jeff Hartings, Pittsburgh possesses one of the biggest and most physical offensive lines in the

league. Faneca gains an immediate edge over most defenders by setting up quickly and getting his hands under their pads. He has the lower-body strength to move the pile on running plays, but also is fast enough to pull and trap. Hartings is as technically sound as any center, taking good angles on blocks and keeping his feet under him most of the time. He plays with a nasty streak and is very physical at the point of attack.

Faneca and left tackle Marvel Smith—who has good quickness and feet and is solid in pass protection—can be effective at sealing the backside when Parker starts right and cuts back left.

Fullback Dan Kreider is extremely physical as a lead blocker. He has enough strength and aggressiveness to knock defenders off their feet.

Defense

The Steelers arguably have the best run defense in the league. Anchored by nose tackle Casey Hampton, their front three consistently win battles at the line of scrimmage and get a strong push. Pittsburgh also plays good gap control defense up front and is not as susceptible to counter and backside plays that often victimize aggressive defenses.

Hampton and ends Aaron Smith and Kimo von Oelhoffen do a good job of tying up blockers to allow the linebackers—Joey Porter and Clark Haggans on the outside and James Farrior and Larry Foote on the inside—to flow to the ball and make tackles.

Porter is relentless in pursuit and has the athletic ability to consistently make plays in the open field. He makes the most of his quick feet and second effort, and does an excellent job of taking away cutback lanes. Porter also is a superb pass rusher from the edge and collected 10.5 sacks on the season. Farrior (113 tackles) reads plays instinctively, which only enhances his considerable initial quickness and makes it difficult for offensive linemen to establish position in front of him. He also has tremendous range that allows him to make sideline-to-sideline tackles and chase down plays from behind.

George Gojkovich/Getty Images

▲ THE NEW STEEL CURTAIN. Troy Polamalu sparked a defense that didn't allow more than 18 points in any of the Steelers' three playoff wins.

Defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau has long believed that the best way to flush a quarterback from the pocket is through aggressive blitzing. Of course, the Steelers' love of the blitz occasionally creates vacancies in the flat and over the middle for tight ends and running backs to freely get open in the passing game.

Strong safety Polamalu has established himself as one of the NFL's best and most versatile safeties. He can blitz, play man coverage, is good in underneath zone, and shows excellent speed and range to handle deep coverage. His overall stats—100 tackles, three sacks, two interceptions, and three fumble recoveries—prove the point. The challenge for a quarterback is determining when he is going to do what, which is especially difficult since one of Polamalu's greatest talents is faking the blitz and then suddenly dropping into coverage.

The weak spot in the defense can be pass coverage, though free safety Chris Hope did have three interceptions and the team works to protect cornerbacks Ike Taylor, Deshea Townsend, and Bryant McFadden with an aggressive pass rush and by playing zone coverage behind the blitz.

Special Teams

Early on in 2005, the Steelers were inconsistent in their coverage units. However, over the past two months, they have shown considerable improvement and are playing solid football. Randle El has had some game-changing punt returns, including two he's brought back for TDs.

Punter Chris Gardocki netted 34.7 yards per kick and placekicker Jeff Reed didn't miss from inside 40 yards and was 24-of-29 overall. Brett Keisel led the special teams units with 23 tackles.

What To Expect

The Steelers are so good at running the ball on first and second down that they put themselves in a lot of third-and-short situations, which for them is another run opportunity. Generally, they like to utilize a fairly safe passing game, almost treating it as an extension of the run. That is prompted in part by Roethlisberger's sore thumb, which limits his vertical throws, though he did go downfield with regularity against Denver.

Despite their preference for an ultra-physical run game, Pittsburgh employs more trickery than any offense in the league. Offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt won't hesitate to call for reverses, halfback passes, and direct snaps to wide receivers who end up throwing the ball and catching the defense off guard. One reason such plays are effective is that the receivers throwing the ball—Ward and Randle El—are former quarterbacks themselves.

If they like the matchups, the Steelers aren't afraid to deviate from their run-first script and come out firing, as they did in their playoff wins over the Colts and the Broncos. And if they jump out to a sizeable lead, they are as good as any team at taking the air out of the ball by putting together long, plodding, run-dominated drives.

Pittsburgh's defense thrives on stopping the run and making its opponent one-dimensional. That's going to be a challenge in this game. But if successful, their blitz pressure can become absolutely relentless and can force a quarterback—even, as the Steelers showed a few weeks ago, a great one like Peyton Manning—into costly mistakes.

— Vic Carucci, NFL.com National Editor

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DAN ROONEY, CHAIRMAN

Paul Spinelli/Getty Images

Team chairman Dan Rooney has carried on the standards and traditions first instilled into the Pittsburgh Steelers' organization by his father, Arthur J. Rooney, who founded the franchise back in 1933.

By the time Art Rooney was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1964, he had begun to turn over much of the operation of the Steelers to his oldest son, Dan. In 1975—after having worked in every area of the organization for two decades—Dan Rooney was named president of the Steelers. He's now in his 51st year with the organization, and stands as one of the most active NFL owners and one of Pittsburgh's most involved executives in civic affairs.

In 2000, Rooney joined his father as only the second father-son tandem enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. As his father before him, Dan Rooney assumed the title of chairman in 2003, and handed over the presidency to his eldest son, Arthur J. Rooney II.

Rooney has been a central figure in NFL operations throughout his career. He is a member of several NFL committees, including the board of directors for the NFL Trust Fund and the NFL Ventures Committee, which includes NFL Properties and NFL Films. In addition, Rooney was chairman of the Expansion Committee in 1973, which considered franchise locations and directed the additions of Seattle and Tampa Bay as expansion teams in 1976.

Also in 1976, Rooney was named chairman of the Labor Negotiating Committee, and in 1982 he contributed to the negotiations for the collective bargaining agreement for the NFL and the Players Association. He again played a key role in the labor agreement reached between NFL owners and players in 1993.

Rooney is currently a member of the NFL Special Committee on League Economics, which is studying the league's revenue sharing policy and overall disbursement of league revenue, and the Hall of Fame Committee. He recently was appointed chairman of the six-person Diversity Committee, charged with establishing guidelines for hiring head coaches in the NFL, and was selected to the Dire Need Fund's board of trustees, which was established to help former NFL players in financial or medical need.

Drawing upon his vast experience in the football business, Rooney has developed a philosophy and style that emphasizes open, practical, and efficient management. He has been commended for molding a model professional sports franchise with a low-key approach and delegation of responsibilities to his well-informed staff. Rooney's accessibility and honesty have allowed him to maintain an excellent relationship with the media, both in Pittsburgh and nationally.

With that leadership style in place and embraced at all levels of the organization, Rooney has been the driving force behind the Steelers' success. Since 1972, Pittsburgh has been AFC champions six times and won four Super Bowls. He also spearheaded the move from Three Rivers Stadium to Heinz Field, which opened in 2001.

Upon taking command of the organization, Rooney hired future Hall of Fame coach Chuck Noll and approved the Steelers' move to the AFC in the NFL-AFL merger, all while turning the team into a long-running success both on and off the field.

Drawing upon his vast experience in the football business, Dan Rooney has developed a philosophy and style that emphasizes open, practical, and efficient management.

Among his community activities, Rooney is a board member for the American Diabetes Association, the United Way of America, the American Ireland Fund, the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. In 2000, he was recognized by the Maxwell Football Club in Philadelphia with the Francis "Reds" Bagnell Award for "contributions to the game of football."

Rooney was born on Pittsburgh's North Side on July 20, 1932, the oldest of the late Art Rooney's five sons. He is a 1950 graduate of North Catholic High School, where he quarterbacked the varsity football team. He went on to graduate from Duquesne University in 1955 with a bachelor of arts degree in accounting.

Rooney and his wife, Patricia, live on the North Side. They have nine children: Art, Patricia, Kathleen (deceased), Rita, Dan, Mary Duffy, John, Jim, and Joan and 16 grandchildren.

STEELERS TEAM OFFICIALS

Daniel M. Rooney	Chairman
Arthur J. Rooney II	President
John R. McGinley	Vice President
Arthur J. Rooney Jr.	Vice President
Charles H. Noll	Administration Advisor
Mark Hart	Director of Business
Omar Khan	Business Operations
Kevin Colbert	Director of Football Operations
Ron Hughes	College Scouting Coordinator
Doug Whaley	Pro Scouting Coordinator
John Norwig	Head Athletic Trainer
Tony Quatrini	Director of Marketing
Dave Lockett	Communications Coordinator
Burt Lauten	Public Relations/Media Manager
Jim Sacco	Director of Stadium Management
Bob McCartney	Video Coordinator
Geraldine Glenn	Human Relations/Office Coordinator
Ben Lentz	Ticket Manager

BILL COWHER, HEAD COACH

Scott Boehm/Getty Images

Bill Cowher guided the Steelers to an 11-5 record and an AFC Wild Card playoff berth in 2005, in his 14th season as coach of his hometown team.

Cowher was introduced as the Steelers' head coach on Jan. 21, 1992. He was just 34 years old at the time, making him one of the youngest head coaches in NFL history. In his tenure, the Steelers have posted an NFL-best 141-82-1 regular-season record with 10 postseason appearances. Cowher has an overall record of 152-91-1 and his win total ranks fourth among active coaches.

Under Cowher, the Steelers have captured eight division titles, advanced to six AFC Championship Games, and now are making their second Super Bowl appearance.

In 2004, the Steelers went 15-1, the most regular-season wins in NFL history by an AFC team. As a result, Cowher was named *The Sporting News* Coach of the Year in a vote by NFL head coaches. In his first year as head coach, he was selected the 1992 NFL Coach of the Year by AP and *The Sporting News* after becoming one of only 12 coaches in league history to win 11 games in his first season at the helm.

Cowher began his coaching career in 1985 with the Cleveland Browns, serving as special teams coach for two seasons and secondary coach for two more. He went to Kansas City in 1989, starting a three-year stint as the Chiefs' defensive coordinator and linebackers coach. A linebacker and special teams standout, Cowher enjoyed a five-year NFL playing career with the Browns (1980-82) and the Eagles (1983-84).

Raised in the Crafton area, west of Pittsburgh, Cowher is a 1975 graduate of Carlynton High School, where he excelled in football, basketball, and track. He attended North Carolina State, earning four letters and starting three years at linebacker for the Wolfpack.

Cowher and his wife, Kaye, have three daughters: Meagan Lyn (19), Lauren Marie (17), and Lindsay Morgan (14).

STEELERS HEAD COACH: BILL COWHER

ASSISTANTS	POSITIONS
Bruce Arians	Wide Receivers
Keith Butler	Linebackers
James Daniel	Tight Ends
Russ Grimm	Offensive Line
Dick Hoak	Running Backs
Ray Horton	Assistant Defensive Backs
Dick LeBeau	Defensive Coordinator
John Mitchell	Defensive Line
Darren Perry	Assistant Defensive Backs
Kevin Spencer	Special Teams
Mark Whipple	Quarterbacks
Ken Whisenhunt	Offensive Coordinator

STEELERS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO	PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	DATE OF BIRTH	NFL EXP	COLLEGE
16	Batch, Charlie	QB	6-2	216	12/5/74	8	Eastern Michigan
36	Bettis, Jerome	RB	5-11	255	2/16/72	13	Notre Dame
72	Brooks, Barrett	T	6-4	325	5/5/72	11	Kansas State
23	Carter, Tyrone	S	5-8	190	3/31/76	6	Minnesota
21	Colclough, Ricardo	CB	5-11	186	4/18/82	2	Tusculum
79	Essex, Trai	T	6-4	324	12/5/82	R	Northwestern
66	Faneca, Alan	G	6-5	307	12/7/76	8	Louisiana State
51	Farrior, James	LB	6-2	243	1/6/75	9	Virginia
50	Foote, Larry	LB	6-0	239	6/12/80	4	Michigan
94	Frazier, Andre	LB	6-5	234	6/29/82	R	Cincinnati
17	Gardocki, Chris	P	6-1	192	2/7/70	15	Clemson
53	Haggans, Clark	LB	6-4	243	1/10/77	6	Colorado State
98	Hampton, Casey	DT	6-1	325	9/3/77	5	Texas
92	Harrison, James	LB	6-0	242	5/4/78	2	Kent State
64	Hartings, Jeff	C	6-3	299	9/7/72	10	Penn State
34	Haynes, Verron	RB	5-9	222	2/17/79	4	Georgia
76	Hoke, Chris	DT	6-3	296	4/6/76	5	Brigham Young
28	Hope, Chris	S	5-11	206	9/29/80	4	Florida State
29	Iwuoma, Chidi	CB	5-8	184	2/19/78	5	California
99	Keisel, Brett	DE	6-5	285	9/19/78	4	Brigham Young
68	Kemoeatu, Chris	G	6-3	344	1/4/83	R	Utah
90	Kirschke, Travis	DE	6-3	298	9/6/74	9	UCLA
35	Kreider, Dan	FB	5-11	255	3/11/77	6	New Hampshire
57	Kriewaldt, Clint	LB	6-1	248	3/16/76	7	Wisc-Stevens Point
31	Logan, Mike	S	6-1	211	9/15/74	9	West Virginia
8	Maddox, Tommy	QB	6-4	219	9/2/71	9	UCLA
89	Mays, Lee	WR	6-2	193	9/18/78	4	Texas-El Paso
20	McFadden, Bryant	CB	5-11	190	11/21/81	R	Florida State
83	Miller, Heath	TE	6-5	256	10/22/82	R	Virginia
81	Morey, Sean	WR	5-11	200	2/26/76	4	Brown
96	Nua, Shaun	DE	6-5	280	5/2/81	R	Brigham Young
56	Okobi, Chukky	C	6-1	318	10/18/78	5	Purdue
39	Parker, Willie	RB	5-10	209	11/11/80	2	North Carolina
43	Polamalu, Troy	S	5-10	212	4/19/81	3	USC
55	Porter, Joey	LB	6-3	250	3/22/77	7	Colorado State
82	Randle El, Antwaan	WR	5-10	192	8/17/79	4	Indiana
3	Reed, Jeff	K	5-11	232	4/9/79	4	North Carolina
7	Roethlisberger, Ben	QB	6-5	241	3/2/82	2	Miami (OH)
73	Simmons, Kendall	G	6-3	319	3/11/79	4	Auburn
91	Smith, Aaron	DE	6-5	298	4/9/76	7	Northern Colorado
77	Smith, Marvel	T	6-5	321	8/6/78	5	Arizona State
22	Staley, Duce	RB	5-11	242	2/27/75	9	South Carolina
78	Starks, Max	T	6-8	337	1/10/82	2	Florida
24	Taylor, Ike	CB	6-1	191	5/5/80	3	LA-Lafayette
26	Townsend, Deshea	CB	5-10	190	9/8/75	8	Alabama
84	Tuman, Jerame	TE	6-4	253	3/24/76	7	Michigan
67	von Oelhoffen, Kimo	DE	6-4	299	1/30/71	12	Boise State
54	Wallace, Rian	LB	6-2	243	5/24/82	R	Temple
86	Ward, Hines	WR	6-0	205	3/8/76	8	Georgia
60	Warren, Greg	LS	6-3	252	10/18/81	R	North Carolina
85	Washington, Nate	WR	6-1	185	8/28/83	R	Tiffin
27	Williams, Willie	CB	5-9	194	12/26/70	13	Western Carolina
80	Wilson, Cedrick	WR	5-10	183	12/17/78	5	Tennessee

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

Charlie Batch (16)
Quarterback

Jerome Bettis (36)
Running Back

Barrett Brooks (72)
Tackle

Tyrone Carter (23)
Safety

Ricardo Colclough (21)
Cornerback

Trai Essex (79)
Tackle

Alan Faneca (66)
Guard

James Farrior (51)
Linebacker

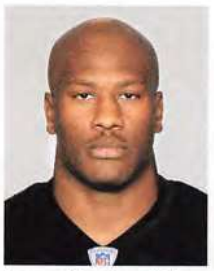
Larry Foote (50)
Linebacker

Andre Frazier (94)
Linebacker

Chris Gardocki (17)
Punter

Clark Haggans (53)
Linebacker

Casey Hampton (98)
Defensive Tackle

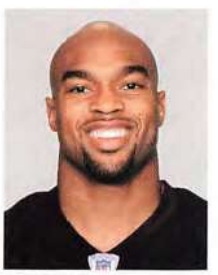


James Harrison (92)
Linebacker

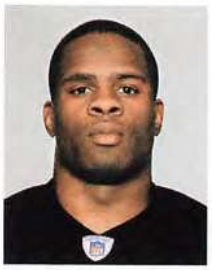
Jeff Hartings (64)
Center

Verron Haynes (34)
Running Back

Chris Hoke (76)
Defensive Tackle



Chris Hope (28)
Safety



Chidi Iwuoma (29)
Cornerback

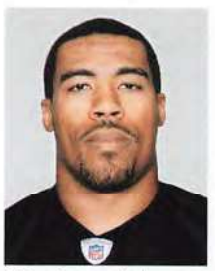
Brett Keisel (99)
Defensive End

Chris Kemoeatu (68)
Guard

Travis Kirschke (90)
Defensive End

Dan Kreider (35)
Fullback

Clint Kriewaldt (57)
Linebacker



Mike Logan (31)
Safety

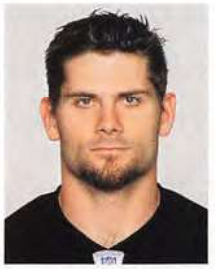
Tommy Maddox (8)
Quarterback

Lee Mays (89)
Wide Receiver

AFC Champion

Bryant McFadden (89)
Cornerback

Heath Miller (83)
Tight End



Sean Morey (81)
Wide Receiver

Shaun Nua (96)
Defensive End

Chukky Okobi (56)
Center

Willie Parker (39)
Running Back

Troy Polamalu (43)
Safety

Joey Porter (55)
Linebacker

Antwaan Randle El (82)
Wide Receiver

Jeff Reed (3)
Kicker

Ben Roethlisberger (7)
Quarterback

Kendall Simmons (73)
Guard

Aaron Smith (91)
Defensive End

Marvel Smith (77)
Tackle

Duce Staley (22)
Running Back

Max Starks (78)
Tackle

Ike Taylor (24)
Cornerback

Deshea Townsend (26)
Cornerback

Jerame Tuman (84)
Tight End

Kimo von Oelhoffen (67)
Defensive End

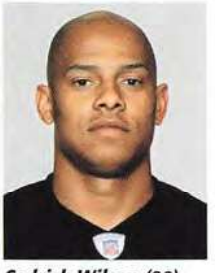
Rian Wallace (54)
Linebacker

Hines Ward (86)
Wide Receiver

Greg Warren (60)
Long Snapper

Nate Washington (85)
Wide Receiver

Willie Williams (27)
Cornerback



Cedrick Wilson (80)
Wide Receiver

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR THE SEATTLE SEAHAWKS TO PLAY THE DISRESPECT CARD. ONCE EASY FOR THE NATIONAL MEDIA TO IGNORE BECAUSE OF THEIR "REMOTE" LOCATION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, THE NFC CHAMPIONS CAN NOW BE FOUND AT THE CENTER OF THE PRO FOOTBALL UNIVERSE–IN DETROIT FOR SUPER BOWL XL.

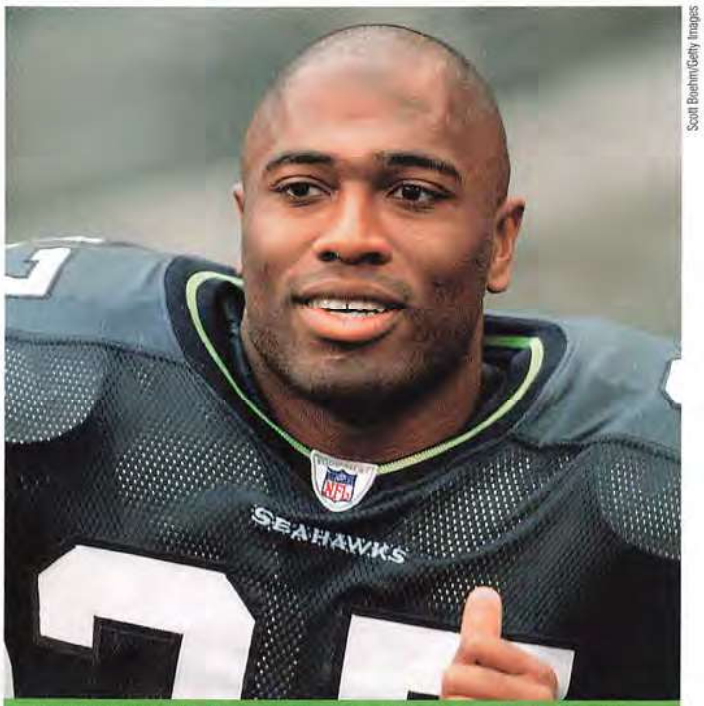
Their running back, Shaun Alexander, is the league's MVP and has adorned the cover of *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN The Magazine*. The Seahawks boasted an NFC-best record of 13-3 and were perfect at Qwest Field, where they dispatched the Redskins and Panthers to advance to their first Super Bowl in the franchise's 30-year history.

Seattle's offense is sending five players to the Pro Bowl—all as starters—and finished the regular season ranked second in the NFL in total yards. Its defense rang up a league-high 50 sacks. And the Seahawks have an excellent head coach in Mike Holmgren, who won Super Bowl XXXI with the Packers and has extensive postseason experience.

Still, the Seahawks try to play off that perceived lack of respect. Take, for instance, all of the recognition that Alexander has received. As far as offensive tackle Walter Jones is concerned, it is merely a case of the rest of the country finally figuring out what the Seahawks and their fans have always known.

"He's been good ever since he's been here," says Jones. "All this season. All his [six-year] career. Everybody is [just] noticing now..."

The fact is the Seahawks have much more going for them than a great running back. Quarterback Matt Hasselbeck is capable of carrying the brunt of the offensive load on his passing arm, which he again demonstrated when Alexander missed most of the 20-10 divisional-round victory over Washington with a concussion.



Scott Boehm/Getty Images

▲ SUPER SHAUN. The league MVP was back in top form in the NFC title game, rushing for 132 yards and scoring on a pair of one-yard runs.

2005 RESULTS (15-3)

Opponent	Score	W/L
@ Jacksonville	14-26	L
Atlanta	21-18	W
Arizona	37-12	W
@ Washington (OT)	17-20	L
@ St. Louis	37-31	W
Houston	42-10	W
Dallas	13-10	W
@ Arizona	33-19	W
St. Louis	31-16	W
@ San Francisco	27-25	W
N.Y. Giants (OT)	24-21	W
@ Philadelphia	42-0	W
San Francisco	41-3	W
@ Tennessee	28-24	W
Indianapolis	28-13	W
@ Green Bay	17-23	L
Playoffs		
Washington	20-10	W
Carolina	34-14	W

NFC Championship Game – @ Seattle 34, Carolina 14

The Seahawks showed why they were the conference's No. 1 seed, beating Carolina for their 12th straight home win to earn their first trip to the Super Bowl. QB Matt Hasselbeck was nearly flawless, completing 20 of 28 passes for 219 yards and two TDs, while Shaun Alexander pounded out a franchise playoff record 132 rushing yards and a pair of scores on his 34 carries. Hasselbeck's 17-yard throw to Jerramy Stevens put the first points on the board and, following a Lofa Tatupu interception, Josh Brown's 24-yard FG extended the lead to 10-0. Marquand Manuel then netted Seattle's second interception of the game, leading to Alexander's 1-yard TD run. Carolina answered with Steve Smith's 59-yard punt return for a score, but the Seahawks put the game away on their first possession of the third quarter. Their eight-play, 65-yard march was capped by Darrell Jackson's 20-yard touchdown reception. With the triumph, Mike Holmgren becomes just the fifth head coach in NFL history to lead two teams to the Super Bowl.

But Hasselbeck has no problem with Alexander being the focal point. In fact, he believes the team benefits when opposing defenses concentrate on stopping the run first.

"You've got to do that," Hasselbeck says. "But at the same time, what about the other stuff that we can do? Pick your poison. That kind of balance is what's been really good for our offense this year."

OFFENSE

Alexander was spectacular in leading the NFL in rushing during the regular season, gaining 1,880 yards with a staggering 5.1 yards per attempt while setting a league record with 27 TD runs (and 28 touchdowns overall). He has the speed and quickness to break long runs and the power to grind out yardage in the trenches. With his vision, patience, and toughness, Alexander's quick cutback ability allows him to

exploit lanes created by over-pursuing defenders. He also shows the second gear to bounce inside runs to the outside once he gets past the line of scrimmage.

The Seahawks like to run to the left side—where the powerful drive-blocking duo of Jones and guard Steve Hutchinson resides—from a two-back set with three receivers. Alexander usually follows fullback Mack Strong, one of the best lead blockers in the NFL, from the "I" formation. The three-receiver grouping may force Pittsburgh to utilize its nickel package, and, therefore, have six run-stoppers matched up against six blockers instead of putting seven in the box.

Hasselbeck, playing the best football of his career, does an outstanding job of managing the Seahawks' West Coast offense and limiting his mistakes. He threw only nine interceptions in 449 pass attempts and displays great awareness and a thorough understanding of the offense. He knows where his receivers will be, when they will be there, and the positioning of the coverage as well as any quarterback in the league.

But don't make the mistake of labeling Hasselbeck a technician with a robotic playing style. He has tremendous ability to improvise when protection breaks down and he's flushed from the pocket. He can generate big plays in the passing game, a number of which result from his movement outside the tackles.

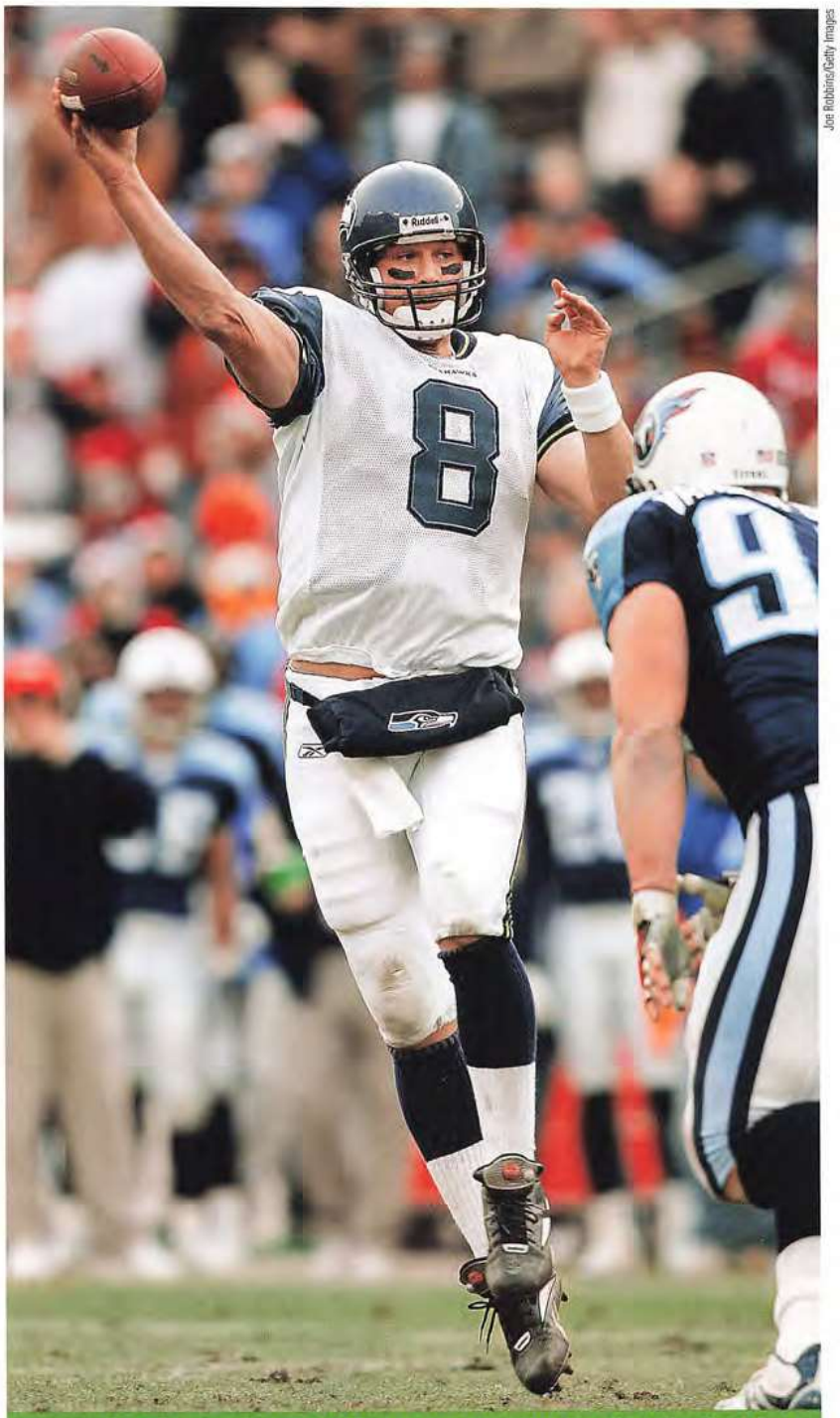
If the Seahawks have a weakness, it may be their lack of a dynamic receiver, but what they lack in "dynamic" they make up for in depth. Their best play-maker is Darrell Jackson (38 receptions, three TDs), who is back from a knee injury. Joe Jurevicius proved to be the catch of free agency—coming over from Tampa Bay—and led Seattle with 10 TDs. He's a reliable, big target who helps move the chains, as does ultra-solid veteran Bobby Engram, who made a team-high 67 catches.

Tight end Jerramy Stevens (45 receptions, five TDs) came on strong late in the season, showing enough speed to consistently make plays down the middle of the field while also taking advantage of his 6-foot-7 frame and body control to win jump balls in the red zone.

The Seahawks won't hesitate to put Stevens, Engram, Jackson, and Jurevicius on the field at the same time to force the Steelers to reach far into the depth of their secondary to cover them while Hasselbeck sits back in the pocket and chooses a mismatch to exploit. Small wonder that 12 different Seahawks caught passes during the regular season or that eight receivers were targeted by Hasselbeck in the NFC title game.

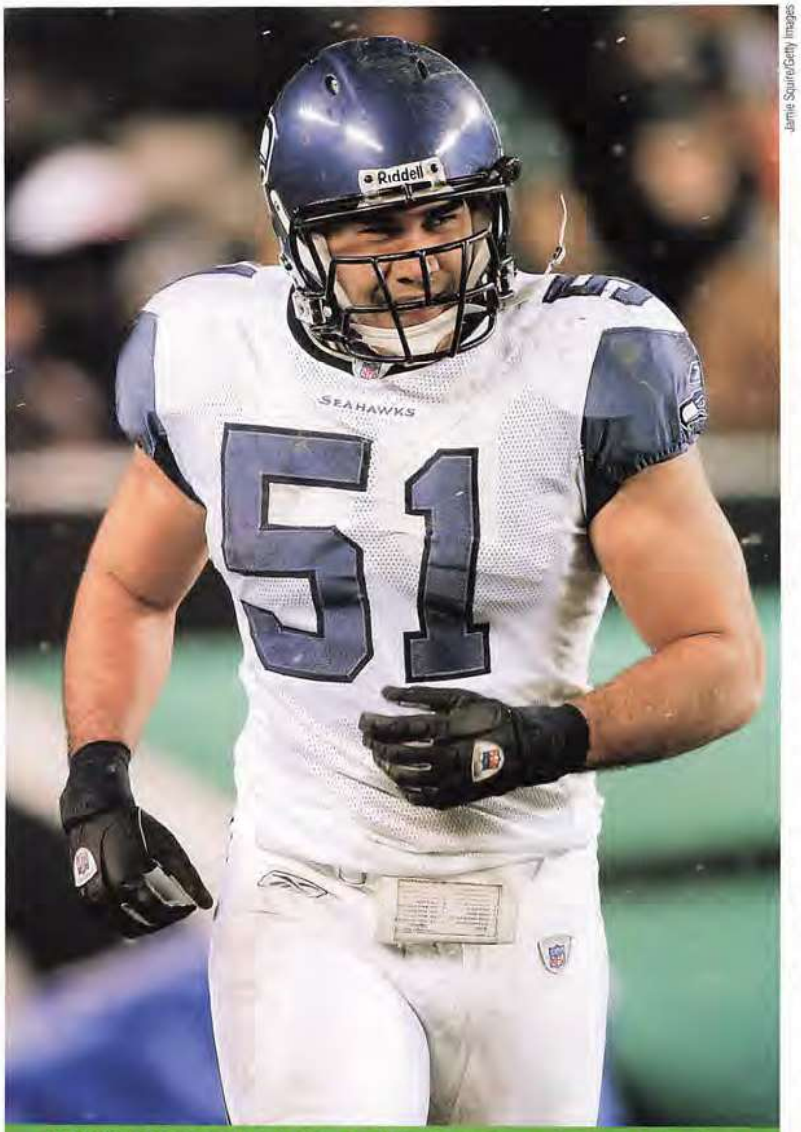
Seattle's offensive line allowed only 27 sacks. It's led by Jones, who rarely takes a false step. On running plays, he has the lower body strength to drive defensive ends off the ball; on pass plays, he sets up quickly and uses his long arms to ride a quick defensive end past the pocket. At the same time, he has the lateral mobility to slide with a defender who tries to redirect inside.

Center Robbie Tobeck and right offensive guard Chris Gray have been extremely solid. Right tackle Sean Locklear has far exceeded expectations after stepping in as a replacement for the injured Floyd Womack, allowing the Seahawks to remain versatile in their attack.



Joe Robbins/Getty Images

▲ **DOUBLE DATE. He may be headed to the Pro Bowl, but Matt Hasselbeck first has a date in Detroit. His two-TD effort against Carolina helped punch Seattle's Super Bowl ticket.**



Jamie Squire/Getty Images

▲ **DEFENSIVE STANDS. After helping hold Washington to 10 points, rookie linebacker Lofa Tatupu contributed three tackles and an interception against the Panthers.**

Defense

The Seahawks' defense is young and aggressive, placing a heavy emphasis on forcing turnovers. They won't take many uncalculated chances with run blitzes, stunts, and eight-man fronts. Instead they keep things simple, relying on a fast and explosive front seven to make plays from a 4-3 scheme and apply pressure through zone blitzes.

The Seahawks have improved their run defense to the point where they can prevent a top running back from beating them. During the regular season, they allowed only 3.6 yards per rush, a mere five rushing TDs, only six runs longer than 20 yards, and a single 100-yard rusher (Tiki Barber of the Giants, who did that to a lot of defenses). The middle has been very active and stout with the performances of tackles Chuck Darby, Marcus Tubbs, Rocky Bernard, and Rodney Bailey.

The Seahawks have done a great job of getting pressure on the quarterback with a four-man rush. They also rotate their defensive tackles effectively, keeping them fresh for the fourth quarter.

Rookie middle linebacker Lofa Tatupu (team-leading 104 tackles) was a strong candidate for NFL defensive rookie of the year. He has shown outstanding instincts and playmaking ability, and continues to be an active player within the Seahawks' defensive schemes.

Tatupu plays about six yards off the ball, with everything funneled to him. He's very instinctive, and is at his best when the tackles are able to allow him freedom to roam. Tatupu and rookie outside linebacker Leroy Hill (72 tackles, 7.5 sacks) are fast, playing with veteran presence.

The Seahawks' pass defense has suffered as a result of a rash of injuries to the secondary, starting with the season-ending injury to free safety Ken Hamlin. Their top three cornerbacks—Andre Dyson (ankle), Kelly Herndon (knee) and Marcus Trufant (back)—all missed time, but have returned to action and, despite being less than 100 percent, are giving as much as their bodies will allow.

Seattle doesn't have a single elite pass rusher. Instead, it relies on several defenders who play their roles well, hustle to the whistle, and generate pressure from just about every position. Ends Bryce Fisher (who led the Seahawks with nine sacks) and Grant Wistrom (52 tackles, four sacks) may not be spectacular, but are solid in applying pressure while also providing a hand in stopping the run.

Special Teams

The Seahawks have had problems with their special teams—they've gone through multiple punters and penalties have plagued their return game. However, their coverage units have been solid, and placekicker Josh Brown is one of the best young players in the NFL at his position.

Tom Rouen, Seattle's third punter of the season, averaged 41.6 yards per attempt and pinned opponents inside their own 20-yard line 20 times.

Josh Scobey has been solid on kickoff returns, averaging 22.5 yards with a long of 53 yards.

What To Expect

Seattle will approach Super Bowl XL with the intention of using its power-oriented offense. At the outset, Pittsburgh can bank on seeing a whole lot of Alexander—both inside and outside—until it demonstrates the ability to stop him...or at least contain him. Carolina could do neither and the result was a dominant performance in the NFC title game.

If Alexander is effective, it will force the Steelers' defense to commit to stopping the run. But that will open things up for Hasselbeck and the passing game to find holes in the secondary. The Seahawks' receivers know how to get open and Hasselbeck excels at distributing the ball evenly among them. Defenses haven't been able to make the right choice between either coping with Alexander's legs or Hasselbeck's throwing arm.

Seattle's defense does a nice job of shutting down the run and will attempt to make Pittsburgh one-dimensional. The Seahawks might not boast the NFL's top sack masters, but they are capable of generating steady pressure and will look to use their young, athletic front seven to force Roethlisberger into mistakes. It will be a different look than he saw against Denver.

If the Seahawks can build a lead, look for them to turn to Alexander to wear down Pittsburgh's defensive front and seal the victory.

—Vic Carucci

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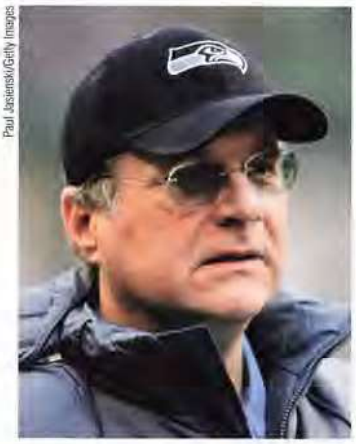
PAUL ALLEN, CHAIRMAN


Paul Jasienski/Getty Images

Investor and philanthropist Paul Allen is chairman of the Seattle Seahawks and is widely credited with saving professional football in the Pacific Northwest.

Allen's ownership in professional sports franchises—he also owns the NBA's Portland Trail Blazers—underscores his great enthusiasm for athletics and his belief in their positive effect on the community at large.

Beyond the sportsmanship and entertainment generated by his teams, both organizations give back to their communities through charitable programs supporting youth in the Pacific Northwest.

He purchased the Seahawks in 1997—preventing a possible relocation of the team—and soon thereafter oversaw the construction of their new home, the 67,000-seat Qwest Field, which opened in 2002. The stadium is located on the same site as the old Kingdome.

In his nine years as the team's owner, Seattle has won three division championships and reached the playoffs on four occasions. The Seahawks captured the AFC West in 1999, marking the franchise's first division crown and playoff appearance in 11 seasons.

In Paul Allen's nine years as owner, the Seahawks have won three division championships and reached the playoffs on four occasions.

With the addition of Houston to the league in 2002, the team changed conferences (interestingly, Seattle played in the NFC in its inaugural season of 1976) and was placed in the NFC West. The Seahawks returned to the playoffs in 2003 by earning an NFC Wild Card berth and have now captured back-to-back NFC West titles. They are the only team in the conference to reach the playoffs in each of the past two seasons.

Allen purchased the Trail Blazers in 1988, and was instrumental in the development and funding of their Rose Garden Arena.

Throughout his life, Allen has created and advanced world-class projects and high-impact initiatives that change and improve the way people live, learn, work, and experience the world through arts, education, entertainment, sports, business, and technology.

With Bill Gates, Allen helped to create the world's first microcomputer and the two men then founded Microsoft in 1976. Best known in those days for his development of computer software and planting the seeds for Windows, Allen remained Microsoft's chief technologist until leaving the company in 1983.

He is the founder and chairman of Vulcan Inc., chairman of Charter Communications (the nation's fourth largest cable provider), and owner of TechTV. In addition, Allen's multibillion dollar investment portfolio includes large stakes in DreamWorks SKG, Oxygen Media, and more than 50 other technology, media, and content companies.

Allen is a Seattle native, educated at Lakeside High School and Washington State University. Listed among the top 15 philanthropists in America—having given more than $800 million to charities—he continues to contribute to the community and the country through the six Paul G. Allen Foundations, which strengthen communities and support vulnerable populations.

He also is founder of the Experience Music Project, a critically-acclaimed interactive music museum, and the Science Fiction Experience Museum. His Vulcan Productions was the independent film company that was behind Todd Haynes' *Far From Heaven*, the 2001 *Evolution* series on PBS, and, more recently, *The Blues*, executive produced by Martin Scorsese in conjunction with Allen and Jody Patton.

In 2002, Allen donated $100 million for the establishment of the Allen Institute for Brain Science. The Institute's first project, the Allen Brain Atlas, combines the disciplines of neuroanatomy and genomics to create the most comprehensive map ever created of the brain from the cellular level.

Made available on the Internet, the data illustrates the functional anatomy of the brain through a collection of gene expression maps, brain circuits, and cell locations.

Researchers around the world will leverage information from the project to gain insights into some of the most profound and challenging questions facing science.

SEAHAWKS TEAM OFFICIALS

Paul Allen	Chairman
Tod Leiweke	CEO
Tim Ruskell	President, Football Operations
Mike Holmgren	Vice President, Football Operations/Head Coach
Mike Flood	Vice President, Community Outreach
Lance Lopes	Vice President, Corporate Partnership/Legal Affairs
Scott Patrick	Vice President, Corporate Sales
Gary Wright	Vice President, Administration
Ron Jenkins	Director of Marketing, Suite Sales, and Service
Will Lewis	Director of Pro Personnel
Dave Pearson	Director of Communications and Broadcasting
Lane Gammel	Assistant Director of Communications
Sandy Gregory	Director of Community Outreach
Chuck Arnold	Director of Ticket Sales/Operations
Rick Crawford	Gameday Presentation
Bill Nayes	Football Operations Coordinator/Team Travel
Thom Fermstad	Video Director Football
Sam Ramsden	Head Athletic Trainer
Erik Kennedy	Equipment Manager

MIKE HOLMGREN, HEAD COACH

Courtesy of the Seahawks

Mike Holmgren is completing his seventh season as head coach of the Seattle Seahawks. He has guided the club to NFC West titles in 2004 and 2005, and this year's team owned the best record in the NFC (13-3).

Holmgren's clubs have posted winning records five times and won three division titles. He owns a 65-52 mark at the helm.

By leading Seattle into the postseason in 1999—when they captured the AFC West—he became just the second coach in team history to take the Seahawks to the playoffs, and just the third coach in NFL history to reach at least seven straight postseasons. He previously led Green Bay into the playoffs six times in a row between 1993 and 1998.

In 2003, the Seahawks won 10 games for just the third time in franchise history, earning a second-place finish in the NFC West and a Wild Card playoff berth. An 8-0 record at Qwest Field marked the first time Seattle had ever gone undefeated at home.

Holmgren, a member of the NFL's Competition Committee, came to Seattle following a successful head coaching tenure with the Packers. Appointed in 1992, he posted a 75-37 regular-season record, a 9-5 postseason mark, and reached two Super Bowls, highlighted by Green Bay's 35-21 victory over the Patriots in Super Bowl XXXI. Holmgren also won two Super Bowls as an assistant coach with the San Francisco 49ers, where he spent the 1986-91 seasons. Before entering the NFL ranks, he was quarterbacks coach at Brigham Young.

After graduating from San Francisco's Lincoln HS, Holmgren attended the University of Southern California from 1966-69. He was selected by the St. Louis Cardinals in the eighth round of the 1970 Draft.

Holmgren and his wife, Kathy, have four daughters—twins Calla and Jenny, Emily, and Gretchen, and two granddaughters.

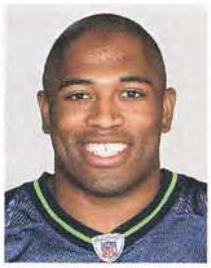
SEAHAWKS HEAD COACH: MIKE HOLMGREN

ASSISTANTS	POSITIONS
Teryl Austin	Defensive Backs
Dwaine Board	Defensive Line
Bob Casullo	Special Teams
Mike Clark	Strength & Conditioning
Nolan Cromwell	Wide Receivers
Gil Haskell	Offensive Coordinator
Darren Krein	Assistant Strength & Conditioning
Bill Laveroni	Offensive Line
Jim Lind	Tight Ends
John Marshall	Linebackers
Stump Mitchell	Running Backs
Gary Reynolds	Offensive Assistant/Quality Control
Ray Rhodes	Defensive Coordinator
Zerick Rollins	Defensive Assistant
Jim Zorn	Quarterbacks

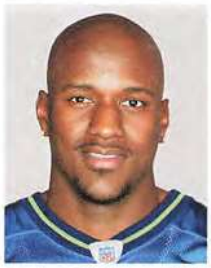
SEAHAWKS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO	PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	DATE OF BIRTH	NFL EXP	COLLEGE
37	Alexander, Shaun	RB	5-11	225	8/30/77	6	Alabama
27	Babineaux, Jordan	CB	6-0	200	8/31/82	2	Southern Arkansas
95	Bailey, Rodney	DT	6-3	305	10/7/79	5	Ohio State
57	Bentley, Kevin	LB	6-0	245	12/29/79	4	Northwestern
99	Bernard, Rocky	DT	6-3	293	4/19/79	4	Texas A&M
28	Boulware, Michael	SS	6-3	223	9/17/81	2	Florida State
3	Brown, Josh	K	6-0	202	4/29/79	3	Nebraska
91	Darby, Chuck	DT	6-0	270	10/22/75	5	South Carolina St.
52	Darche, Jean-Philippe	LS	6-0	246	2/28/75	6	McGill
21	Dyson, Andre	CB	5-10	183	5/25/79	5	Utah
84	Engram, Bobby	WR	5-10	188	1/7/73	10	Penn State
94	Fisher, Bryce	DE	6-3	268	5/12/77	5	Air Force Academy
62	Gray, Chris	G	6-4	308	6/19/70	13	Auburn
11	Greene, David	QB	6-3	226	6/22/82	R	Georgia
18	Hackett, D.J.	WR	6-2	199	7/3/81	2	Colorado
83	Hannam, Ryan	TE	6-2	248	2/24/80	4	Northern Iowa
25	Harden, Michael	CB	5-11	190	10/21/81	2	Missouri
8	Hasselbeck, Matt	QB	6-4	223	9/25/75	7	Boston College
31	Herndon, Kelly	CB	5-10	180	11/3/76	4	Toledo
56	Hill, Leroy	LB	6-1	229	9/14/82	R	Clemson
73	Hunter, Wayne	T	6-5	303	7/2/81	3	Hawaii
76	Hutchinson, Steve	G	6-5	313	11/1/77	5	Michigan
82	Jackson, Darrell	WR	6-0	201	12/6/78	6	Florida
71	Jones, Walter	T	6-5	315	1/19/74	9	Florida State
87	Jurevicius, Joe	WR	6-5	230	12/23/74	8	Penn State
58	Kacyvenski, Isaiah	LB	6-1	252	10/3/77	6	Harvard
53	Koutouvides, Niko	LB	6-2	238	3/25/81	2	Purdue
54	Lewis, D.D.	LB	6-1	241	1/8/79	4	Texas
75	Locklear, Sean	T	6-4	301	5/29/81	2	North Carolina State
33	Manuel, Marquand	FS	6-0	209	7/11/79	4	Florida
88	Mili, Itula	TE	6-4	260	4/20/73	9	Brigham Young
20	Morris, Maurice	RB	5-11	202	12/1/79	4	Oregon
78	Pollard, Robert	DE	6-2	278	6/28/81	2	TCU
35	Pruitt, Etric	FS	6-0	196	8/16/81	2	Southern Mississippi
16	Rouen, Tom	P	6-3	225	6/9/68	13	Colorado
39	Scobey, Josh	RB	6-0	220	12/11/79	4	Kansas State
65	Spencer, Chris	C	6-3	309	3/28/82	R	Mississippi
86	Stevens, Jerramy	TE	6-7	260	11/13/79	4	Washington
38	Strong, Mack	FB	6-0	245	9/11/71	13	Georgia
69	Tafoya, Joe	DE	6-4	265	9/6/78	5	Arizona
51	Tatupu, Lofa	LB	6-0	238	11/15/82	R	USC
93	Terrill, Craig	DT	6-2	294	6/27/80	2	Purdue
61	Tobeck, Robbie	C	6-4	297	3/6/70	12	Washington State
23	Trufant, Marcus	CB	5-11	199	12/25/80	3	Washington State
90	Tubbs, Marcus	DT	6-3	324	5/16/81	2	Texas
15	Wallace, Seneca	QB	5-11	196	8/6/80	3	Iowa State
81	Warrick, Peter	WR	5-11	195	6/19/77	6	Florida State
43	Weaver, Leonard	FB	6-0	251	9/23/82	R	Carson-Newman
22	Williams, Jimmy	CB	5-11	190	3/10/79	5	Vanderbilt
74	Willis, Ray	T	6-6	327	8/13/82	R	Florida State
98	Wistrom, Grant	DE	6-4	272	7/3/76	8	Nebraska
77	Womack, Floyd	T/G	6-4	333	11/15/78	5	Mississippi State
50	Wortham, Cornelius	LB	6-1	236	1/25/82	R	Alabama

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS



Shaun Alexander (37)
Running Back



Jordan Babineaux (27)
Cornerback

Rodney Bailey (95)
Defensive Tackle

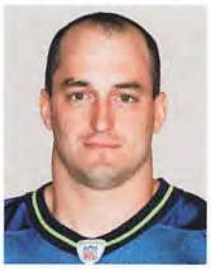
Kevin Bentley (57)
Linebacker

Rocky Bernard (99)
Defensive Tackle

Michael Boulware (28)
Strong Safety

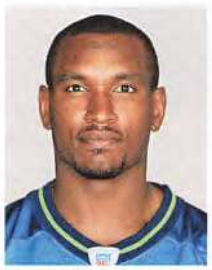
Josh Brown (3)
Kicker

Chuck Darby (91)
Defensive Tackle

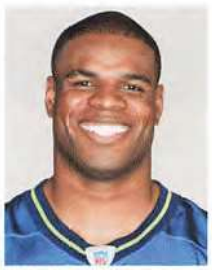


Jean-Philippe Darche (52)
Long Snapper

Andre Dyson (21)
Cornerback



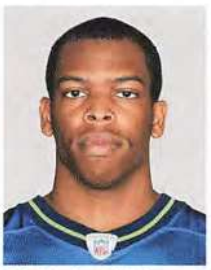
Bobby Engram (84)
Wide Receiver



Bryce Fisher (94)
Defensive End

Chris Gray (62)
Guard

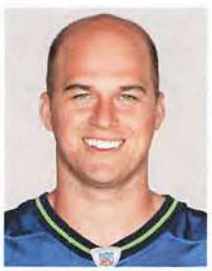
David Greene (11)
Quarterback



D.J. Hackett (18)
Wide Receiver

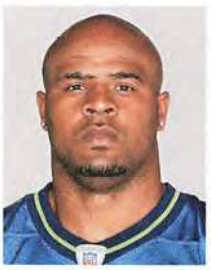
Ryan Hannam (83)
Tight End

Michael Harden (25)
Cornerback

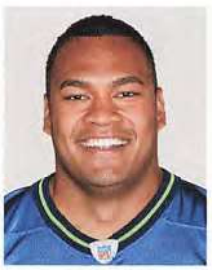


Matt Hasselbeck (8)
Quarterback

Kelly Herndon (31)
Cornerback



Leroy Hill (56)
Linebacker

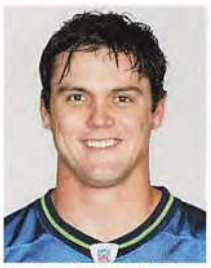


Wayne Hunter (73)
Tackle

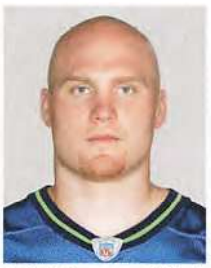
Steve Hutchinson (76)
Guard

Darrell Jackson (82)
Wide Receiver

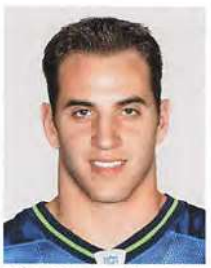
Walter Jones (71)
Tackle



Joe Jurevicius (87)
Wide Receiver

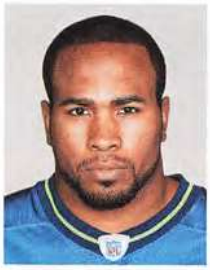


Isaiah Kacyvenski (58)
Linebacker



Niko Koutouvides (53)
Linebacker

NFC CHAMPION

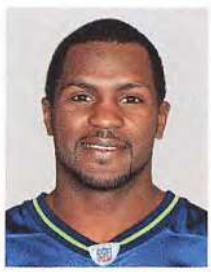


D.D. Lewis (54)
Linebacker

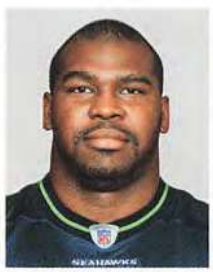
Sean Locklear (75)
Tackle

Marquand Manuel (33)
Free Safety

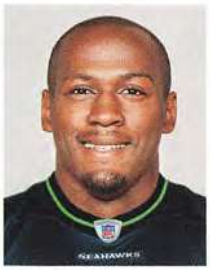
Itula Mili (88)
Tight End



Maurice Morris (20)
Running Back



Robert Pollard (78)
Defensive End

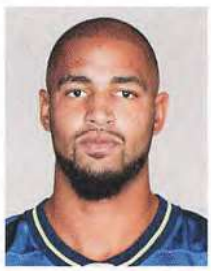


Etric Pruitt (35)
Free Safety

Tom Rouen (16)
Punter

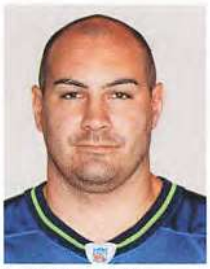
Josh Scobey (39)
Running Back

Chris Spencer (65)
Center

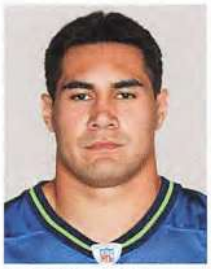


Jerramy Stevens (86)
Tight End

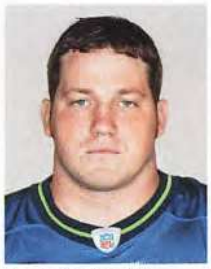
Mack Strong (38)
Fullback



Joe Tafoya (69)
Defensive End



Lofa Tatupu (51)
Linebacker

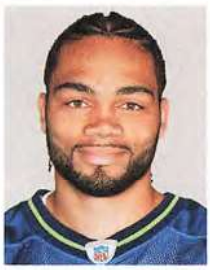


Craig Terrill (93)
Defensive Tackle

Robbie Tobeck (61)
Center

Marcus Trufant (23)
Cornerback

Marcus Tubbs (90)
Defensive Tackle

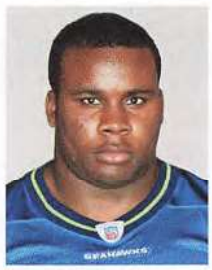


Seneca Wallace (15)
Quarterback

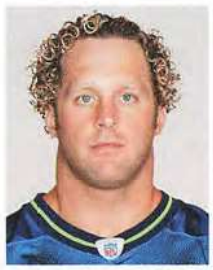
Peter Warrick (81)
Wide Receiver

Leonard Weaver (43)
Fullback

Jimmy Williams (22)
Cornerback

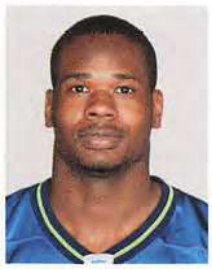


Ray Willis (74)
Tackle



Grant Wistrom (98)
Defensive End

Floyd Womack (77)
Tackle/Guard



Cornelius Wortham (50)
Linebacker

Seizing *the* MOMENT

by Ray Didinger

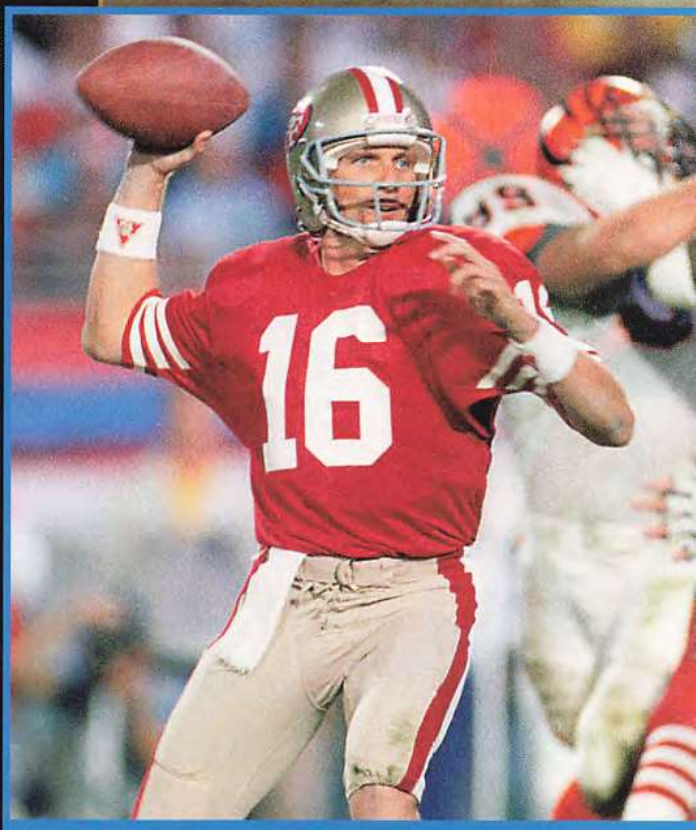
Many Super Bowl outcomes have been determined by one game-changing play.

The key to making the big play, Bill Walsh believes, is approaching it like any other play.

Even if it is the Super Bowl with a billion people watching and the air so thick with tension that, for most players, taking a deep breath is like trying to suck molasses through a straw. Even if it is likely to be the play that decides a world championship or defines a career, Walsh says the best thing to do is to ignore the drum roll, the spotlight, and the vertigo and just stick to the basics.

"What you don't want," Walsh says, "is players thinking this will require something heroic. You don't want them thinking they have to do more. That's when the pressure can overwhelm them. Rather, they should be thinking: 'We've done this before. All we have to do is execute.' They should be calm and confident. If they are, every play becomes a high-percentage play.

"Of course," Walsh adds with a knowing smile, "it helps if you have Joe Montana at quarterback."



US Presswire

Joe Montana's touchdown pass to John Taylor (right) to win Super Bowl XXIII capped one of the most dramatic drives in football history.

US Presswire

Montana is the standard by which we measure big-play performers. He threw 11 touchdown passes and no interceptions in leading the San Francisco 49ers to four wins in his four trips to the Super Bowl. Walsh was his coach for the first three, including the 20-16 victory over Cincinnati in Super Bowl XXIII that culminated with Montana directing an 11-play, 92-yard drive for the winning touchdown, a 10-yard pass to John Taylor with 34 seconds remaining.

That game, and that drive, was the final chapter of Walsh's pro coaching career and it was the very essence of the man they called "Joe Cool." It is now part of Super Bowl lore that as the 49ers were waiting to begin that final drive, trailing by three points with time running out, Montana calmly surveyed the scene at Miami's Joe Robbie Stadium and said: "Hey, check it out. There's John Candy."

Sure enough, there was John Candy sitting in the stands, eating popcorn, waiting along with the rest of the civilized world for the game to resume. "We looked over and it was like 'John Candy, wow, that's cool,'" tackle Harris Barton remembers. "It broke the tension. Joe loosened things up. Then the ref blew his whistle and Joe said, 'OK, here we go.' The rest is history."

"I don't go up and down [emotionally]," says Montana, a three-time

Tom Hauck/Getty Images

Mike Jones' tackle of Tennessee wide receiver Kevin Dyson at the one-yard line preserved St. Louis' 23-16 victory in Super Bowl XXXIV. Jones says, "The smartest thing I did on that play was not over-try."

Super Bowl Most Valuable Player. "I always felt relaxed was better. If you had too much emotion, it was harder to focus."

Montana's focus was so laser sharp—and his grasp of the Walsh offense so complete—that during the final drive, he began to hyperventilate and yet still led the team to a touchdown. Trying to call signals over the roar of the crowd made Montana so lightheaded, he almost blacked out at one point. He threw the next pass away deliberately (his only incompletion on the drive) so he could have a moment to catch his breath. Like most things Montana tried on the field, it worked.

"There are a lot of people who play the game, but there aren't a lot of people who know how to play the game," explains John Madden, who won Super Bowl XI as head coach of the Oakland Raiders. "Joe Montana knew how to play the game. Situations where other [quarterbacks] were frantic, Joe was cool. Where other guys were tight, Joe was loose. Where they were confused, he was in control. Part of it was the [Walsh] system, a perfect fit for him. And he had great players around him. But Joe was the guy who made it work. He seemed like a guy who'd been there before and knew how to handle it."

It is hard to quantify the degree to which a truly superior competitor, such as Montana, influences those high stakes moments. Certainly, he improves his team's chances and Walsh freely admits he was the beneficiary of Montana's unique gifts. But Walsh also believes the system and how a team prepares over the course of a season has a lot to do with how it responds on Super Sunday. He questions the notion of "stepping up," as in, "the quarterback has to step up in this game." Better he should continue doing what he has done all year, Walsh says, and that applies to everyone on the team.

The setting may be extraordinary—the fireworks, the bombast, the celebrity glitter of the Super Bowl—but the task on the field should remain ordinary. There's bound to be anxiety. Barton talks about feeling like "a rabid dog" when he came on the field for the final drive against Cincinnati, but players can rise above that if they know, and believe in, what they are asked to do.

"That [game-winning] drive was the culmination of 10 years of planning and practice," Walsh says. "Every play was a play that we had practiced and rehearsed so many times. There were no miracles, no Hail Mary's, just a lot of seven and eight yard gains. There was only one pass longer than 20 yards [a 27-yard throw to Jerry Rice]. We had run this [two-minute drill] countless times. Each man knew his responsibilities and carried them out."

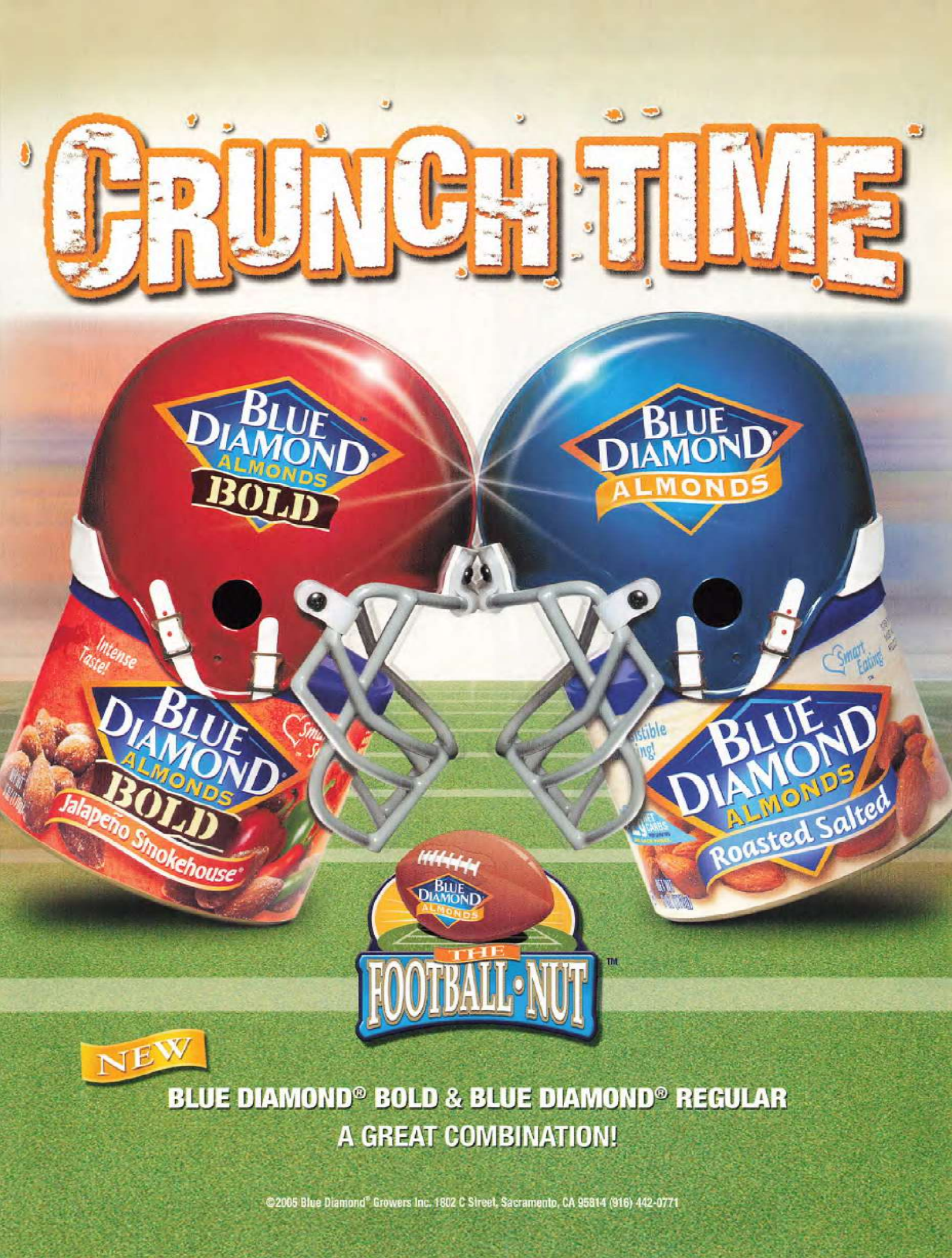
The players do not have to be future Hall of Famers, like Montana, or even Pro Bowlers, like Harris Barton. They can be journeymen like Mike Jones, the St. Louis linebacker who was in his ninth NFL season, most of them spent on special teams, when he made the last-second tackle on Tennessee wide receiver Kevin Dyson that preserved a 23-16 win in Super Bowl XXXIV.

Jones was playing the outside zone as Dyson and tight end Frank Wycheck ran their combination pattern from the Rams' 10-yard line. He shadowed Dyson and, after the Titans receiver caught the pass from Steve McNair, dragged him down just short of the goal line. Wrote Ray Ratto in *The San Francisco Examiner*: "It was Jones, more than Kurt Warner and Isaac Bruce, who will be remembered in the five-second clips that define the Super Bowl because he had the best five seconds of any player on the field."

"The smartest thing I did on that play was not over-try," Jones says, supporting Walsh's point. "If I had tried to put a kill shot on Dyson, he might have bounced off and gone in. I just wrapped him up and took him down, the old textbook tackle.

"It wasn't until after the game when Peter King [of *Sports Illustrated*] said, 'You're part of football history' that I thought about it in those terms. The next week, I was on *Regis and Kathy Lee*, I was on *The Charlie Rose Show*, I was the guy who made 'The Tackle.' The moral of the story is you have to make the most of your opportunities. You might have to wait a long time like I did and you might only get one shot, so you have to be prepared because you never know when it's going to be there."

The same could be said for the pivotal moments in the Super Bowl itself. Some are as obvious as the Montana drive and the Jones tackle, but other games have ended in lopsided scores, yet turned on one critical play. The man who made it may not win the Pete Rozelle MVP Trophy or get the trip to Disney, but he, too, delivered in the clutch. So what if it was in the first or second act instead of the third?



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Manny Rubio/Wirelmage.com

When Carl Banks wrapped up the Broncos' Sammy Winder as part of a goal-line stand in Super Bowl XXI, the game's momentum suddenly shifted to the Giants.

The first Super Bowl, for example, was won by Green Bay, 35-10, over Kansas City. On paper, it looks like a blowout, and the backstory of rogue receiver Max McGee partying all night and then catching two TD passes from Bart Starr is what people remember. But the truth is that the Packers, lords of the mighty NFL, were in a sweat at halftime as they went to the locker room with a tenuous 14-10 lead. The Chiefs, the upstarts from the American Football League, were a much tougher challenge than anyone expected.

"All of a sudden, this [Kansas City] team that most people thought was a joke wasn't a joke anymore," recalls Bill Curry, the Green Bay center. "They played us almost even for 30 minutes and they were gaining confidence. I remember the look on coach [Vince] Lombardi's face. He was worried. We all were worried."

Lombardi was worried enough to put in a blitz package for the second half. Normally, Lombardi was scornful of the blitz. "The weapon of weaklings," he called it. He believed in pressuring the quarterback with his front four. But after watching Len Dawson operate so effectively in Kansas City's floating pocket, Lombardi swallowed his pride and blitzed linebackers Dave Robinson and Lee Roy Caffey on the first third-down situation of the second half.

"They caught us in a blocking scheme where we were unprotected from my left side," Dawson says. "They surprised us. All of a sudden, I had this pressure in my face and made a critical mistake. I tried to get the ball to [tight end] Fred Arbanas. I never saw Willie Wood."

Wood, Green Bay's free safety, played it perfectly. Floating in the middle of the field, he broke on the ball the instant it left Dawson's hand. He cut in front of Arbanas and made the interception, returning it 50 yards to the Kansas City five-yard line. On the next play, halfback Elijah Pitts scored and, just like that, Green Bay was ahead 21-10. The Chiefs were never in the game after that.

"You don't like to think one play can make that much of a difference, but in this case it did," said the late Hank Stram, who coached Kansas City that season and would later lead the Chiefs to their Super Bowl IV title.

"I should've held the ball or thrown it up into the stands," says Dawson. "That was the turning point. At halftime, we really felt like we were going to win the game, but the interception deflated us. Give the Packers credit. Vince made the call and Willie made the play. That's why they were a great team."

"The funny thing about it," Wood says, "is for such a big play, it was so easy. It was like Lenny threw the ball right to me. I wasn't looking to make a big play. I wasn't the kind of safety who took a lot of chances. Vince didn't allow it. He believed in each man carrying out his assignment. If you do that, you'll get your opportunities to make the big plays. But if you try to force it, that's when you make a big mistake."

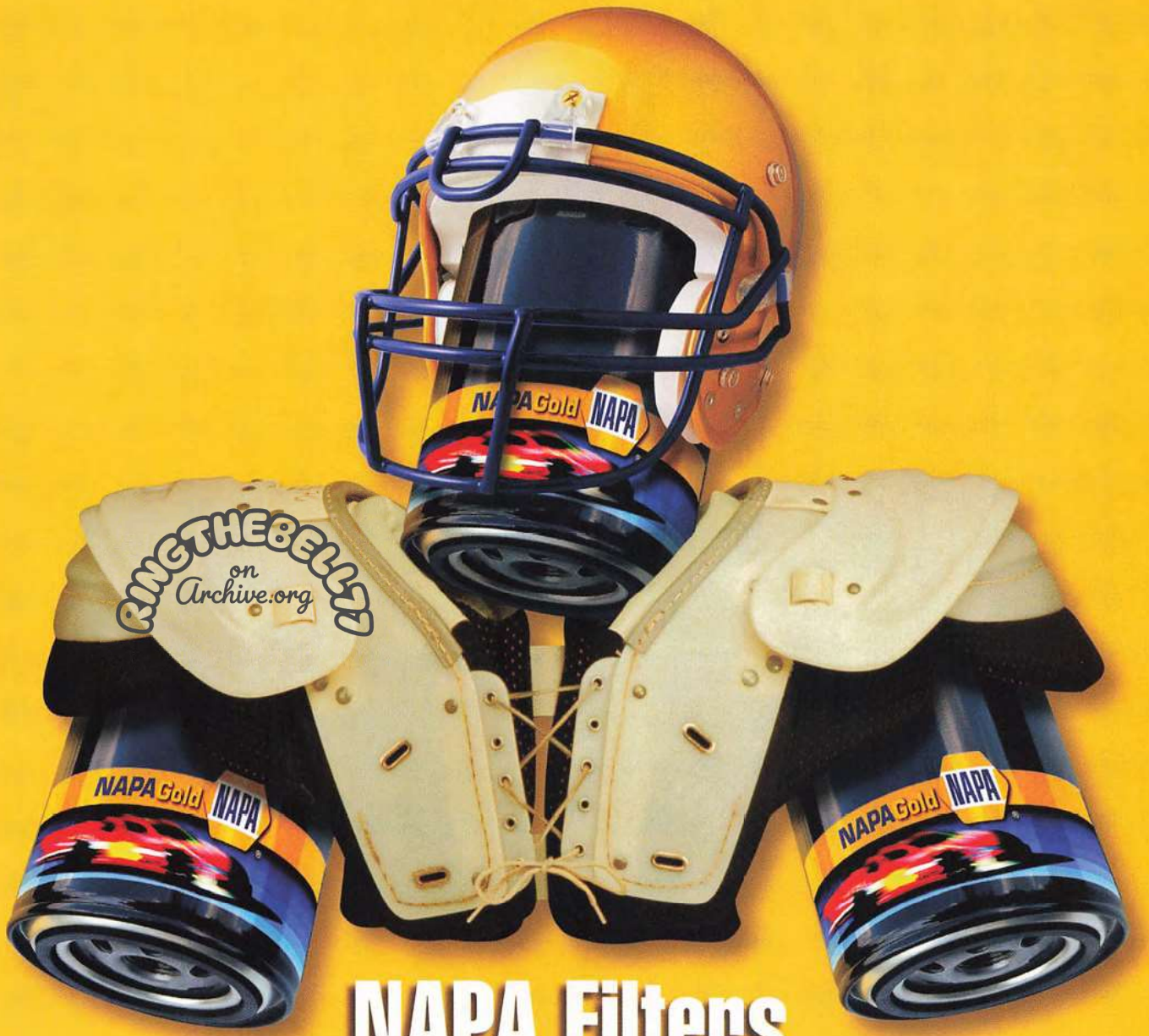
The story of Super Bowl XXI would seem to begin and end with Giants quarterback Phil Simms. He did, after all, have perhaps the greatest passing day in Super Bowl history, completing 22 of 25 attempts for 268 yards and three TDs in the 39-20 win over Denver. But according to Broncos quarterback John Elway, the game turned in the second quarter on a goal-line stand by the New York defense.

Denver was leading, 10-7, and Elway was driving the Broncos toward another touchdown. They had first and goal at the one-yard line. On first down, Elway tried to sweep right end and was tackled by Lawrence Taylor for a loss of one. On second down, Gerald Willhite ran up the middle and was stopped cold by Harry Carson. On third down, coach Dan Reeves called for a sweep by halfback Sammy Winder and Carl Banks dropped him for a four-yard loss.

If that wasn't demoralizing enough, kicker Rich Karlis was wide right on his 23-yard field goal attempt, the shortest field goal miss in Super Bowl history. Instead of extending their lead, the Broncos opened the door to a Giants comeback. New York scored the next 26 points as Simms passed his way into the record books. But Elway felt the game was lost on that goal-line series.

"If we had scored there," Elway says, "it would have been a different game."

Here, as in the other cases, it was not a Herculean effort by one player taking it upon himself to save the day, nor was it a victory fueled by raw emotion. There was no pep talk, no adjustment in strategy. It was just a great team, in this case the Giants' defense,



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doing what it had done all season—imposing its will, and muscle, on the opposition. When they beat Washington, 17-0, in the NFC Championship Game, the Giants (who had the league's top-ranked defense) didn't allow a single third or fourth down conversion. The Redskins went a miserable 0-for-18.

"All year we were beating people up and breaking them down," says Banks, a superb outside linebacker who was often overshadowed by Taylor, his Hall of Fame teammate. "Denver ran a lot of screen passes and quarterback draws, stuff that had us off-balance. But once they got down to the goal line, we drew a line in the sand. We said, 'These SOBs are not going to score.'

"At that point, we put our stamp on the game. We took them on, man to man, and brought the hammer down. Three straight plays, we stuffed them. When that series ended, we looked them in the eye and said, 'We own you.' From that point on, it was no contest."

AP WWP

With the Redskins trailing Miami, 17-13, in Super Bowl XVII and facing a critical fourth-and-one early in the final quarter, they turned to John Riggins, who broke free to score a 43-yard touchdown.

Similar to the 49ers offense, which followed the same tried-and-true formula, the New York defense stayed with its normal scheme drawn up by head coach Bill Parcells and coordinator Bill Belichick. As they studied tape of their 19-16 regular-season win over Denver, Banks noted that the one touchdown the Broncos scored came on a Winder sweep, so when it was third-and-goal in the Super Bowl, Banks kept his eye on Winder, which allowed him to chase down the play from the backside.

"Their line didn't block as hard on plays going away," Banks says, "so I was able to get inside the tight end and get the angle on Winder. That's the thing about big plays. They don't just happen and you don't just get lucky. On that series, our execution was perfect."

Banks agrees there is such a thing as a "big play psychology." Some players, he says, thrive on pressure situations. Others hesitate and, therefore, fail. Sports psychologists have a term for it—fear paralysis—and it can be as debilitating as a torn hamstring.

"I never felt it, I know L.T. didn't feel it," declares Banks. "So much of this game, or any game, is mental. Why do you think Michael Jordan wanted the ball at the end of every game? Because he really believed he'd make the shot. That's where it all starts, with that belief."

Joe Bugel, Washington's offensive line coach, calls it "football arrogance" and he points to John Riggins, the Hall of Fame running back, as a man who wore it like a suit of armor.

"We'd come out for warmups and John would be checking the house," Bugel remembers. "He'd ask, 'How many people are here today?' I'd answer, 'Sixty thousand, 70 thousand, something like that.' And he'd say, 'They're all here to see me, so tell Joe [Gibbs, the head coach] to give me the ball.' He wanted it all on his shoulders and the bigger the game, the more he wanted it."

There was no bigger game in Redskins history than Super Bowl XVII when Washington met Miami before 103,667 fans at the Rose Bowl. Riggins had carried the team to Pasadena (and would end up rushing for 610 yards in Washington's four playoff victories). It marked the first Super Bowl for the Redskins under Gibbs, but in facing the Dolphins with coach Don Shula, they were up against a team with a significant edge in experience and pedigree.

Entering the fourth quarter, Miami led 17-13. With 10 minutes to play, Washington faced fourth-and-one at the Miami 43-yard line. Gibbs never hesitated. He called for 70 Chip, the team's best short-yardage play. It was a two tight end formation with Riggins, the 6-2, 250-pound battering ram, following lead blocker Otis Wonsley off the left side.

"Everyone in North America knew what was coming," Riggins says. "I might as well have held up a sign that read, 'I'm getting the ball.' But it's one thing to know something's coming and it's another thing to stop it. We only needed a yard and I knew the Hogs [the offensive line] could get me that. As it turned out, we got a whole lot more."

"We had great confidence in the play," Bugel says. "We ran it against 12 and 13 [defenders] in practice and still made yardage. It was our bread-and-butter. On this play, [tackle Joe] Jacoby and [guard Russ] Grimm got great blocks and John cut right off [tight end] Donnie Warren's butt.

"We used to tell John, 'We can block 10 guys, but there's always gonna be one guy we can't block because of the quarterback. That's

AP WWP

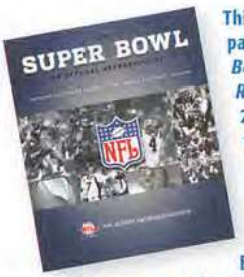
John Stallworth's over-the-shoulder 70-yard touchdown catch from Terry Bradshaw put the Steelers ahead for good in their Super Bowl XIV win against the L.A. Rams.

your guy, you have to beat him.' In this case, it was the cornerback [Don] McNeal."

"Whenever John broke through to the second level clean, like he did on that play, he was unstoppable," remembers center Jeff Bostic. "He would punish those defensive backs. I can't imagine what goes through the mind of a 190-pound safety who has to take on that big diesel. He would run through those guys and never break stride."

The 5-11, 180-pound McNeal got a piece of Riggins' jersey, but couldn't slow him down. Riggins broke free for a 43-yard TD that gave the Redskins their first lead of the game. They scored again on their next possession—with Riggins carrying the ball eight times—to make the final score 27-17. Riggins finished with 166 yards on 38 rushing attempts, a Super Bowl record.

"When I see the film of that run," Bugel says, "and I see the close-up of John's face, God, it's awesome. The look on his face, the intensity, that's what won the game. Seventy Chip, that play is etched in stone."



This story also is part of *The Super Bowl: An Official Retrospective*, a 216-page chronicle that recaps the NFL title game from the Packers' triumph in Super Bowl I to New England's win last season. Lavishly illustrated, it features essays from NFL legends and Super Bowl MVPs, and includes the DVD *In their Own Words*. It was published in November by Ballantine Books.

It's the perfect marriage of man and moment, a Hall of Famer running a team's best percentage play. It is a solid bet, even on fourth down, and can turn the tide as it did for the Redskins in Pasadena. But on the same field three years earlier, the Steelers won their fourth Super Bowl a different way. Coach Chuck Noll sent in a play that no one believed in, but a Hall of Fame QB (Terry Bradshaw) and his Hall of Fame receiver (John Stallworth) made it work.

The Steelers were losing, 19-17, to the underdog Los Angeles Rams early in the fourth quarter when Noll called for 60-Prevent-Slot-Hook-And-Go. They ran the play all week in practice and never connected. Bradshaw had so little confidence in the play that, on game day, he refused to run it the first time Noll sent it in.

But with 12 minutes remaining and Rams defensive coordinator Bud Carson (a former Steelers assistant) choking off the middle zones, Noll again told Bradshaw to throw long. Lynn Swann was out of the game with a concussion, so Stallworth was Pittsburgh's only deep threat, which meant he was sure to draw double coverage. Bradshaw, who already had thrown three interceptions, was willing to trust his coach's judgment this time.

"I should've been bombing away earlier," Bradshaw admits. "We could've beaten them by going deep. That was our strength and their weakness. We played into their hands by throwing underneath. But they were set up for the long ball. Stall faked the hook, the safety [Eddie Brown] bit on it and Stall was one-on-one with the corner [Rod Perry]. I just let it fly."

Bradshaw's pass was perfect. It cleared Perry's outstretched hand and Stallworth caught it over his shoulder and galloped away to complete a 73-yard touchdown that put the Steelers ahead 24-19. Jack Lambert intercepted a Vince Ferragamo pass to set up a Franco Harris touchdown in the closing minutes to make the final score a deceptive 31-19. It was a much closer contest than that, and what finally tipped the scales was the Bradshaw-to-Stallworth bomb.

That was characteristic of Bradshaw, who was in many ways the anti-Montana, yet shared the same bottom line: Four Super Bowl appearances, four wins. Bradshaw was high-strung while Montana was calm; Bradshaw made mistakes and turned the ball over, which Montana never did. But in the fourth quarter, when the game was on the line, both quarterbacks were at their best. Bradshaw threw a touchdown pass in the fourth quarter in each of his Super Bowl appearances. He averaged a stunning 26.5 yards per completion and did not throw a single fourth-quarter interception.

"Forget all the other junk," Bradshaw declares. "Winning championships is the measure of every player in any sport. We did that and we did it together. That's what I treasure. That's what I'll take to my grave."

Bradshaw's ability was huge, obviously, but the collective ability of his Pittsburgh teammates was part of the equation as well. He was taking the snap from a Hall of Fame center (Mike Webster), handing off to a Hall of Fame running back (Franco Harris) and throwing to two Hall of Fame receivers (Swann and Stallworth). And don't forget the Steel Curtain defense.

"It gives you a tremendous feeling of confidence, knowing those guys are there for you," Bradshaw says. "Did you ever sit on a great horse and feel that power? That's about what it's like. And I was lucky enough to ride that horse in four Super Bowls. It doesn't get any better than that." ■

Ray Didinger is a senior producer with NFL Films. Previously, he was a sportswriter for 27 years, covering pro football for the Philadelphia Bulletin *and the* Philadelphia Daily News.

More Super Moments

Super Bowl V

There were 11 turnovers and a Super Bowl-record six interceptions in this game between Baltimore and Dallas, but the biggest interception was made by Colts safety Rick Volk midway through the fourth quarter.

Baltimore was trailing, 13-6, when Earl Morrall replaced an injured Johnny Unitas at quarterback. The Colts had been unable to move the ball against Dallas' "Doomsday Defense" and were running out of time, and hope, when Volk intercepted a Craig Morton pass and returned it 30 yards to the Cowboys' three-yard line. Two plays later, Tom Nowatzke scored a TD and Jim O'Brien kicked the extra point to tie the game.

In the final minutes, a Mike Curtis pickoff set up O'Brien for the 32-yard field goal that gave the Colts a 16-13 victory, but it was Volk's interception that got them back in the game.

"We were frustrated all day," Morrall said. "That play let us punch in a touchdown. It really lifted us."

Super Bowl X

With 11 minutes to play, Pittsburgh faced a 10-7 deficit against Dallas in a hard-fought game at Miami's Orange Bowl. Steelers coach Chuck Noll departed from his usual strategy and put on an all-out 10 man rush at Dallas punter Mitch Hoopes, hoping for a block.

Reserve fullback Reggie Harrison had never before blocked a kick, but he blocked this one. The ball struck him in the face and split his tongue, but it was worth the pain to see the ball roll out of the end zone for a safety that cut the Cowboys' lead to 10-9.

More than that, wrote Phil Musick in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the play "seemed to strip the Cowboys of their confidence."

"I could see the balloon collapsing right then," said Dallas tackle Jethro Pugh.

Doug Mills/AP WWP

James Washington

Over the game's next eight minutes, the Steelers scored 12 unanswered points (two field goals and a touchdown) to take the lead. They won, 21-17, to earn their second consecutive Super Bowl triumph.

Super Bowl XV

A huge momentum swing late in the first quarter put Oakland on track to defeat Philadelphia, 27-10, in the Louisiana Superdome. Trailing 7-0, the Eagles appeared to tie the game on a 40-yard pass from Ron Jaworski to wideout Rodney Parker. However, the play was nullified by an illegal motion penalty called against the other receiver, Harold Carmichael.

The Eagles were forced to punt and the Raiders took over at their own 14-yard line. Three plays later, Jim Plunkett lofted a pass over the frantic reach of Eagles' cornerback Herman Edwards and into the arms of Kenny King, who raced for an 80-yard TD. Instead of a 7-7 deadlock, the Eagles found themselves in a 14-point hole that they never escaped.

"If we would have made a couple of big plays early, we would have been okay," recalled Eagles coach Dick Vermeil. "But we fell behind and we seemed to sag emotionally. The play to King really hurt."

Super Bowl XVI

Joe Montana won the first of his three Super Bowl MVP awards in this game, but the outcome was truly decided by the San Francisco defense, which stopped Cincinnati at the goal line on four consecutive plays late in the third quarter.

The 49ers were leading, 20-7, but the Bengals had scored on their previous possession and their defense had shut down Montana the entire period. When Cincinnati drove to the San Francisco three-yard line and faced a first-and-goal, they had the momentum.

But the 49ers stuffed the Bengals on four plays, three of them sledgehammer runs by Pete Johnson, the 6-0, 260-pound fullback. The third play, on third down, was a swing pass from QB Ken Anderson to Charles Alexander, but linebacker Dan Bunz slammed Alexander to the turf just short of the end zone.

"Twenty times out of 20, that play is a touchdown," admitted Chuck Studley, the 49ers defensive coordinator, "but Bunz read it perfectly and made a great hit."

Bunz and fellow LB Jack Reynolds combined to stop Johnson on the fourth down play and the 49ers held on to win their first NFL championship, 26-21.

Super Bowl XXVIII

Dallas was trailing Buffalo, 13-6, at the start of the second half, but safety James Washington made a play that changed the tone of the game. He pounced on a fumble by the Bills' Thurman Thomas and returned it 46 yards for a touchdown that tied the score.

The Cowboys scored the next 17 points and won going away, 30-13.

"I had a feeling it was my day," said Washington. "I told Michael Irvin and Ken Norton before the game, 'This is my day.' I had studied the Buffalo offense. I knew their formations and patterns cold. I said, 'I know everything they're going to run. I woke up that morning at six, and my mind was racing. I couldn't wait to play.'"

Washington forced a Thomas fumble in the first quarter that set up a Dallas field goal. Later in the second half, he intercepted a pass that led to the game's final touchdown. In between, he recorded 11 tackles. But it was his fumble recovery in the third quarter that made the difference.

Susan Ragan/AP WWP

Desmond Howard

Super Bowl XXXI

Desmond Howard became the first special teams player to earn MVP honors in a Super Bowl as his 99-yard touchdown on a fourth quarter kickoff return helped Green Bay defeat New England, 35-21.

The Packers led most of the game, but the young Patriots, under the direction of coach Bill Parcells, kept clawing back. They closed the gap to 27-21 on a TD run by Curtis Martin and, for the moment at least, they had stolen the momentum from Green Bay.

But on the ensuing kickoff, Howard went the distance and ended the Patriots threat with the longest kickoff return in Super Bowl history. He also had punt returns of 32 and 34 yards and finished the day with 244 yards in combined return yardage.

Super Bowl XXXVI

Everyone remembers how it ended—with Adam Vinatieri's 48-yard FG that won the game—and some recall Tom Brady 's 23-yard pass to Troy Brown that got the Patriots across midfield.

But the biggest play in New England's drive to its first Super Bowl title was the fourth play when, facing a second-and-10 at his own 30, Brady threw a safety valve pass to halfback J.R. Redmond. He picked up 11 yards and a first down; equally important, he got out of bounds to stop the clock with 33 seconds to play.

The Patriots and Rams were tied, 17-17, but until that play, offensive coordinator Charlie Weis was uncertain about whether or not he would try to win the game in regulation. In the ABC broadcast booth, John Madden said when the Patriots got the ball at their own 17 with 1:21 left, they should play for overtime.

"You don't want to take any chances," Madden said on-air.

Weis knew better than to take chances, but he was not prepared to simply sit on the ball either. He had Brady throw a few safe passes, hoping they could nickel-and-dime their way into field goal range. But Weis was still hedging his bets until the Redmond play.

"To be honest with you," Weis says now, "if he had gotten tackled in bounds, we probably would have kneeled on it and gone into OT, because then you're still on your own 30 and you're trying to rush things."

A Family Affair

by Jerry Green

Scott Boehm/Getty Images

Vision, innovation, and football are all part of the Ford family legacy.

This year's Super Bowl scenario originates with a boxy, black, new-fangled motor vehicle with a stiff clutch and running boards and a crank to get the engine putt-putt-putting. It's a vision of the world on wheels by Henry Ford, the patriarch, more than a century ago. It continues on to another vision—of a 21st century football stadium—by another Ford, a great-grandson, three generations later.

The Ford family always has had its visionaries. And it was Bill Ford Jr. who cranked up the mission to construct Ford Field, the $500 million domed showcase that not only brought the Lions back "home" from the suburbs, but also has enabled Detroit to host Super Bowl XL.

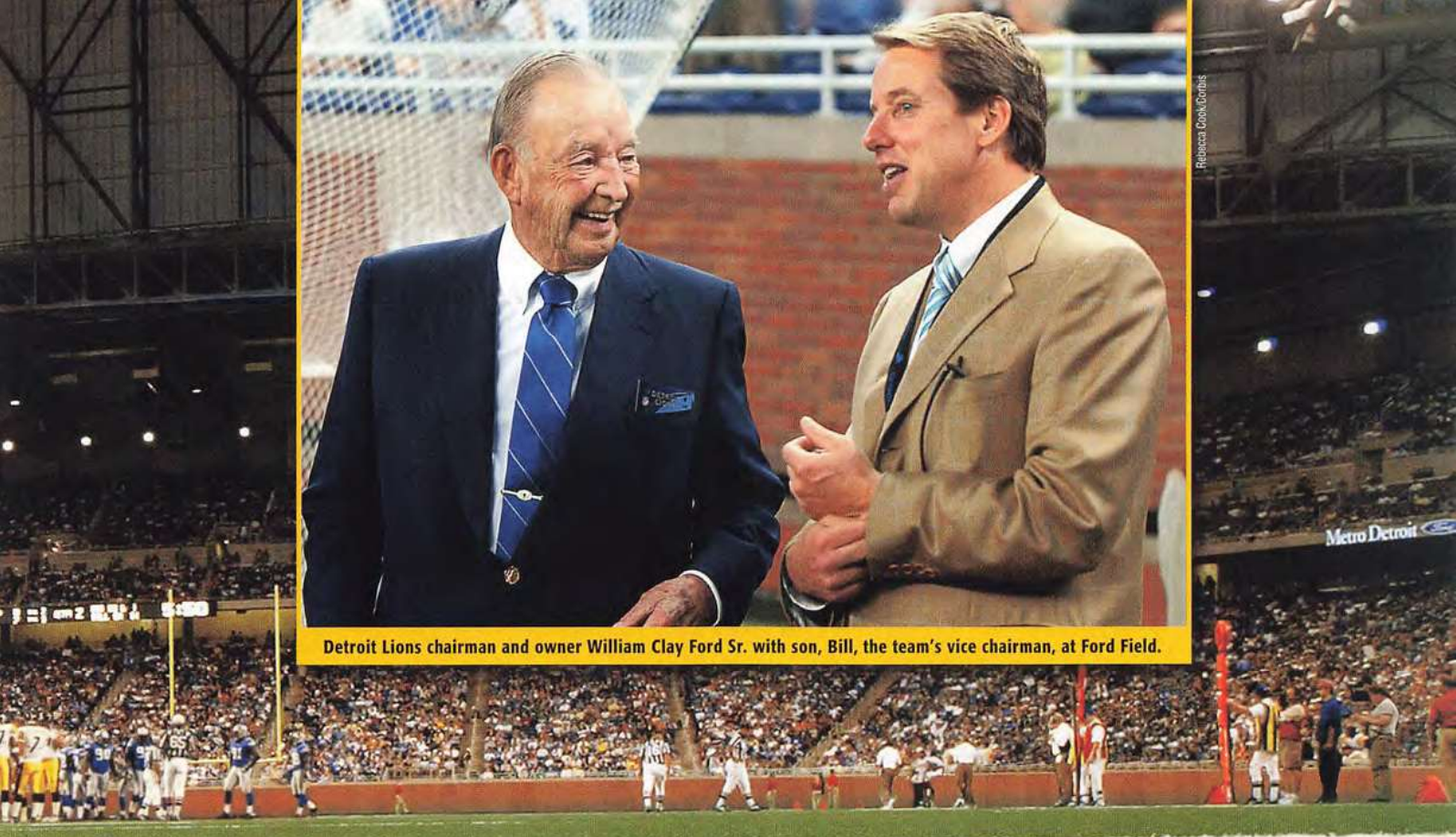
"Ford Field is proving to be everything that we thought it would be," says Ford Jr., the CEO/chairman of the board of the Ford Motor Company and son of Detroit Lions owner William Clay Ford Sr. "First and foremost, it is the best stadium for football, especially for our fans. And it is a vital cog in Detroit's rebirth as it continues to attract some of the biggest sporting events in the world."

It doesn't get any bigger than the Super Bowl, which is expected to pump millions of dollars into the local economy and attract more than 100,000 visitors to the Motor City—in the middle of winter no less.

Plans for Ford Field were announced in August 1996, and six years later the Lions opened the 67,500-seat downtown facility. The first regular-season game—a contest against the archrival Green Bay Packers—and every one since has been sold out. But in between the announcement and that initial game, it took tremendous planning, convincing, and negotiating to make the stadium and the hosting of Super Bowl XL a reality.

"The first piece was to get the stadium itself built," says Ford Jr., the Lions' vice chairman since early 1995 and a member of the NFL International Committee.

"It was quite a process," admits Ford. "We had to go to the [league] ownership and convince them it was going to be a great decision to give a Super Bowl to Detroit.



Rebecca Cook/Corbis

Detroit Lions chairman and owner William Clay Ford Sr. with son, Bill, the team's vice chairman, at Ford Field.

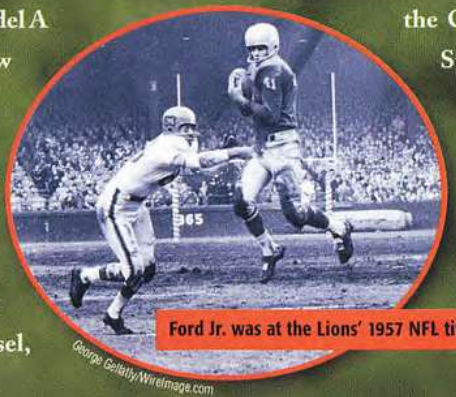
"Before we set about to build [Ford Field], we visited all the domed stadiums in the NFL," continues Ford Jr. "It became clear to me that most were cold and sterile. So it was important that we build a stadium that was warm, inviting, and had natural light—because most of the indoor stadiums in the NFL had no natural light—and was instantly recognizable as Detroit. And that kind of manifested itself, I believe, through the glass atriums, where you look out at Comerica [Park] and also at the skyline."

That skyline also could serve as a timeline, a story of one of America's most prominent families: the passage of the patriarch and his dream of affordable automobiles to son to grandson to great-grandson. It is a story of football and of industry and of charity and deliverance to the Detroit community. Henry Ford was the first father, revered and remembered for developing the assembly line that revolutionized American manufacturing and produced the Model T and Model A automobiles. In 1903, he founded what is now the Ford Motor Company, one of America's and Detroit's "Big Three" automakers.

His son was Edsel, who became president of Ford, developer of the Lincoln and the Mercury, and, sadly, a man who died at a young age. And one of Henry Ford's grandsons is William Clay Ford, son of Edsel, father of Bill Jr., and owner and chairman of the Detroit Lions.

Perhaps it's fitting for the Super Bowl to be played in Ford Field, since the National Football League itself was founded in an automobile dealership—the Hupmobile Agency in Canton, Ohio—back in 1920, when it was still necessary for strong arms and cranks to ignite the engines of many motor vehicles. By then, America's roads were paved and gas stations had been built in the nation's towns…and Henry Ford was selling about a million of his Model T's to common folk each year.

It is not known whether Henry Ford ever developed any interest in the NFL or professional football, but the generations of family that followed have become passionate about both. Just as football was emerging as the sport of the common folk, Edsel brought his nine-year-old son Bill to his first football game. The Lions, who in 1930 had begun as the Portsmouth Spartans, were facing the Chicago Bears at the University of Detroit Stadium in a Thanksgiving Day contest now historically recalled as the first covered on a national radio broadcast (with play-by-play by NBC's Graham McNamee).



George Gellaty/Wirelmage.com

Ford Jr. was at the Lions' 1957 NFL title game.

"The first year they were in town, 1934. I went to the game with my father, " says William Clay Ford Sr. "You got to start someplace."

Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Siblings Benson (left) and Henry Ford II (standing) pose with William Clay Ford. Behind them are portraits of their father, Edsel, and grandfather, Henry Ford.

While Ford Field offers a glimpse into Detroit's future, its name stands as a tribute to a family forever entwined in America's history.

The lad was smitten with the sport, a passion he retains at age 80. He attended scores of Lions games before serving in the U.S. Naval Air Corp during World War II and then attending Yale, where he was an all-league soccer and tennis player. Twenty-two years after his first encounter with pro football, Ford Sr. joined the Lions as a club director. By then, he was responsible for corporate product planning and design at Ford Motor Company. And he wasted no time making certain that his love for the game—and the Lions—was passed along.

"I was taken to my first Lions game when I was six months old," says Ford Jr., now 48.

It was 1957, and Detroit defeated the Cleveland Browns for the NFL Championship on a gray Sunday after Christmas.

"I went to that championship game…I obviously don't remember anything about it," he says of the 59-14 triumph that marked the team's third league title in six years and fourth in franchise history.

Ford Sr. became the Lions' president in 1961 and two years later bought the team outright for $4.5 million. By then, pro football Sundays in Detroit had developed into a family routine—Bill Sr., his wife Martha Firestone Ford, young Bill, and daughters Martha, Sheila, and Elizabeth.

"I can remember as a little child being wrapped in blankets and being taken to Tiger Stadium—I don't remember much of the games, but I do remember drinking hot chocolate while freezing to death in the stands. We did that every week during football season, every year of my childhood," says Ford Jr.

"After those games, we'd all go back to the Lions' offices, on Michigan Avenue. The players and their wives would come back, too, and I'd run around with the players' children and we'd throw the football."

During his youth, Ford Jr. saw big changes in the sport: the merger of the NFL and AFL; the Lions' placement in the league's "Black and Blue" division, the NFC Central; and the team's 1975 move to the Silverdome in Pontiac, Michigan, some 30 miles outside the city's borders. He graduated from Princeton, earned a master's of science degree from MIT, and in 1980 was named the Lions' treasurer. During the past two decades, he has served on the NFL's Finance Committee, Broadcasting Committee, and Properties Committee.

Ford's ongoing commitment to the league and its continued growth matches the big-picture approach of his great-grandfather. In 1998, *Time* magazine commissioned Lee Iacocca, who had started in the automobile business with the Ford Motor Company, to write an article about Henry Ford for the series "Time 100—Builders and Titans."

"The boss was a genius," Iacocca wrote. "He was an eccentric…But Henry Ford's mark in history is almost unbelievable. In 1905, when there were 50 start-up companies a year trying to get into the auto business, his backers at the new Ford Motor Company were insisting that the best way to maximize profits was to build a car for the rich.

"But Ford was from modest Michigan agrarian roots," continued Iacocca. "And he thought that the guys who made the cars ought to be able to afford one themselves. In typical fashion, instead of listening to his backers, Ford eventually bought them out."

Henry Ford has been credited with helping create the American middle class and this awareness was the forerunner to the Ford family's wide-ranging involvement in charitable efforts in the community. Detroit Lions Charities supports many endeavors, among them the Detroit Police Athletic League youth football program. Ten years ago, the William Clay Ford Center for Athletic Medicine—a treatment and research facility—opened at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital.

Ford Jr. headed a joint effort between the Lions, Detroit Public Schools, and Communities in Schools of Detroit to create the Detroit Lions Academy. Open to sixth, seventh, and eighth-graders, the school enables nearly 150 students to learn in an alternative environment. He's also overseen the expansion of Lions Charities, which has awarded more than $3.2 million to worthy organizations over the past 15 years.

Although nearly 50 years have passed since the Lions won their last NFL title, they've maintained their status as an essential part of the city's sports fabric. That's even more the case now that they've left the Silverdome—which hosted Super Bowl XVI between the 49ers and Bengals—and returned downtown.

"Detroit is a very sports-oriented city," reminds Ford Sr., who was inducted this past October into the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame. "And Ford Field, more and more, has become a focal point of increased activity in the total downtown area. There are new buildings and businesses going up around it. Coupled with Comerica Park and the Fox Theatre, it's going to become part of the central hub of downtown Detroit, hopefully doing its part in revitalizing the whole area."

While Ford Field offers a glimpse into Detroit's future, its name stands as a tribute to a family forever entwined in America's history.

"It's a legacy I'm very proud of, and one that everybody who works at Ford is proud of," said Ford Jr. "At the same time, it's not one that I can compare myself to. I think anybody who would try to do that would give up on day one because it's such a daunting prospect.

"But it is something I'm proud of and that I try to live up to."

And that's a scenario that plays out every day in the Ford family. ■

Jerry Green started covering pro football in 1965 as the Lions' beat writer, and later as a sports columnist for The Detroit News. *He is one of five writers to cover every Super Bowl. In 2005, he entered the Pro Football Hall of Fame as the winner of the Dick McCann Memorial Award.*

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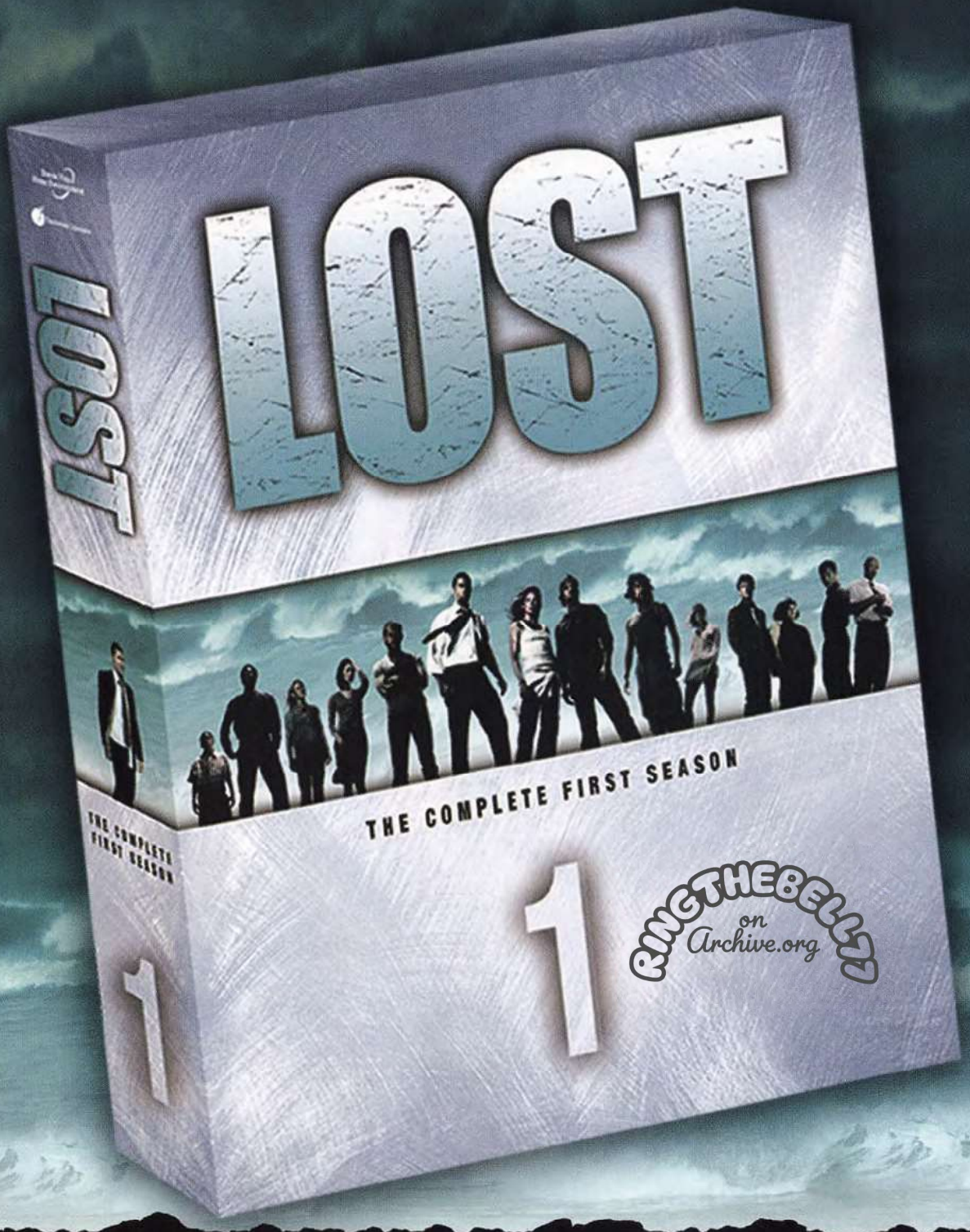

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The 1972 Dolphins' offense or the 1978 Steelers' defense? With Bob Griese (left) and Earl Morrall at quarterback, Miami scored a league-best 27.5 ppg. L.C. Greenwood (right) was one of the many forces on Pittsburgh's vaunted "Steel Curtain" defense.

49ers Bears Broncos Buccaneers Chiefs Colts Cowboys Dolphins

WINNER IS...

Two football experts debate the greatest Super Bowl champion.

by Craig Ellenport

"America's Game" is a 40-part series that will launch this fall on NFL Network. It covers 40 years of the Super Bowl, going behind the scenes to tell stories you've never heard, with NFL footage that has never been seen.

As part of this retrospective, the league polled 40 influential NFL experts—players, coaches, general managers, and the media—to determine which Super Bowl champion is the best ever.

What emerged from the debate is proof of just how difficult a task this is. Each voter brought a unique perspective, valuing different criteria to define the word "dominant." In the end, teams from every era were well represented—the early Packers and the perfect Dolphins of 1972, a few of the Steelers' championship squads and the 49ers (take your pick from their five Super Bowl winners), to more recent entries like the early '90s Cowboys, the late '90s Broncos, and last year's Patriots.

Two of the Network's pollsters were veteran NFL scribes Edwin Pope of the *Miami Herald*—who is among just five writers to cover every Super Bowl—and Jarrett Bell of *USA Today*. Edwin and Jarrett elaborated on their picks during a recent conversation.

CE: Edwin, since you've attended every Super Bowl, you get to kick off this discussion. You picked the 1972 Miami Dolphins as the best Super Bowl team of all time. Here's a chance to state your case.

EP: First of all, they were unbeaten. And you can't beat unbeaten. There are some misconceptions about the 1972 Dolphins. There's a perception that they were a boring, uninteresting, inoffensive team, and that the defense carried them. That's not true. The '72 Dolphins, I believe, are the only team to finish number one in all four top statistical categories—offensive yards and points and defensive yards and points.

Hardly any of their games were even close. Don Shula didn't run up the score, though he did leave his regulars in a long time, because he was obsessed with somebody coming back to beat him. They were never behind in the fourth quarter for 13 straight games, from the third game of the regular season to the AFC Championship Game against Pittsburgh. That's when they put in Bob Griese, who had been out since the fifth game with an ankle injury. Earl Morrall had taken them through the season and to the championship game, but they were down at halftime and Shula put Griese in and he helped them win it.

For some reason, a lot of people have doubts about Griese, especially whether he should be in the Hall of Fame. But he actually threw more touchdown passes in his career [192] than Sammy Baugh, Otto Graham, Sid Luckman, Joe Namath, Bart Starr, Roger Staubach, Norm Van Brocklin, and Bob Waterfield. Griese was better than anyone gave him credit for, though he was overshadowed by the fact that Miami had a great running attack.

And the Dolphins did have a great running game. They had three top backs and each one was as good as the next—Larry Csonka, Jim Kiick, Mercury Morris. Each one could do something different.

If there was anything boring about the season, it's that there was no suspense. The Dolphins didn't come close to losing at all, except for one or two games, and no other teams came close to them.

CE: Jarrett, before you make your case for the 1978 Steelers, where did the '72 Dolphins rank on your list?

JB: They were in the top five, but they weren't number one. With all due respect to Edwin—and to Don Shula—I agree that perfection is a great thing, but I just think that the '78 Steelers were the best team.

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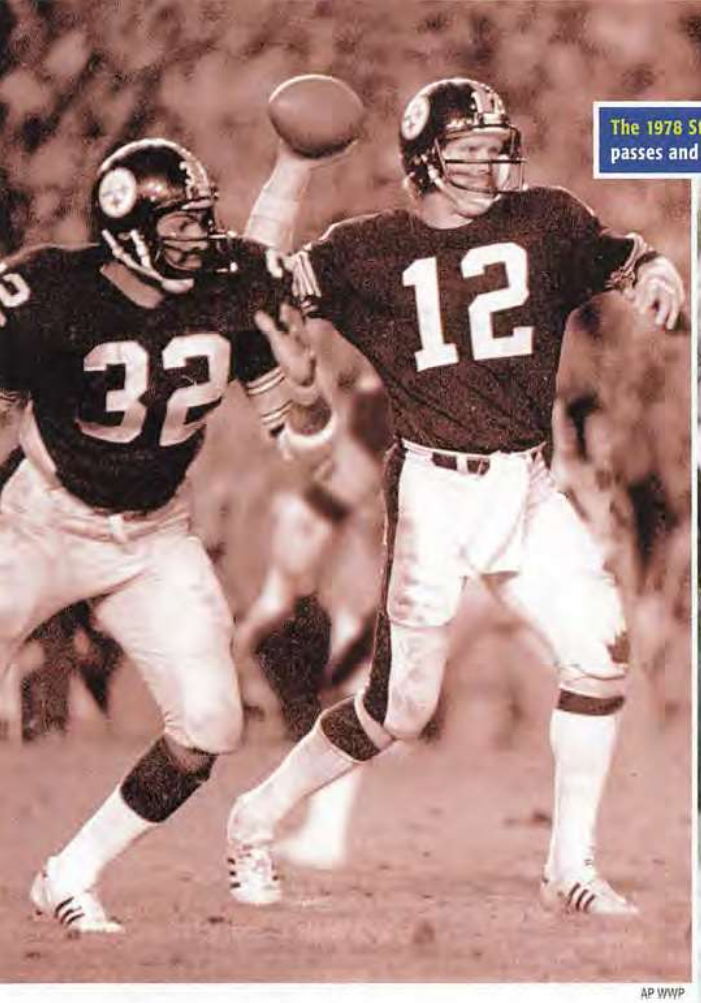

AP WWP

The 1978 Steelers' offense or the 1972 Dolphins' defense? Left: Terry Bradshaw (No. 12) threw 28 touchdown passes and had weapons like Franco Harris. Jake Scott (below) snared two interceptions in Super Bowl VII.

Bruce Bennett Studios/Getty Images

They went 14-2, and the losses were both close games. But what put them over the top for me was that they were right in the middle of those four Super Bowl titles over a six-year span. I know the Dolphins won back-to-back titles, but winning four Super Bowls in six years is just so impressive. They dominated the league for a long stretch of time.

That team has nine guys in the Hall of Fame—and there have been a lot of arguments for some others. When you talk about balance in football, the Steelers epitomized that. They could beat you running the ball with Franco Harris, and they could beat you throwing it with Terry Bradshaw and receivers John Stallworth and Lynn Swann. And they could really dominate on defense. When you look up and down the roster, that's what did it for me.

There's so much you can say about the Dolphins—as well as the 49ers of the 1980s and Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers. It's a tough thing for a lot of us to be in position to pick one team over the others. But given that task, I went with the '78 Steelers.

CE: Who would be the most indispensable player from that team?

JB: Great question! What happens if you take Mean Joe Greene out of the defensive line? You've still got three other Pro Bowlers there. If you take Jack Lambert out of the linebacking corps, you've still got Jack Ham. So I guess I'd say Terry Bradshaw was the most essential. That may sound like the easy answer because he was the quarterback, but it's obviously the most important position.

The one thing about the '72 Dolphins is that they went a long stretch of the season without Bob Griese and still won. I don't think the Steelers would have been able to do that without Bradshaw. That's no knock on [backup] Mike Kruczek. We didn't see him have to take over the team the way Earl Morrall did.

CE: So does that make Morrall the most indispensable member of the '72 Dolphins?

EP: I guess it does. If Griese and Morrall had both gone down, it's fair to say they would not have gone undefeated. Jim Del Gaizo was their third-string quarterback. He earned Morrall's undying fondness by saying, "Who knows? Morrall might break a leg one of these days."

I agree with the dynastic part of the Steelers. I don't think any team has come close to the Steelers' dynasty. But the Dolphins could have been a dynastic team, too, if the World Football League hadn't come along and whisked away Csonka, Kiick, and [Paul] Warfield in 1975. They could have gone on to Super Bowl IX if not for missing one fourth-quarter pass in Oakland [in a 28-26 defeat in the divisional playoffs], and then they lost those three stars the following year.

CE: I'm curious as to how you think these teams would fare playing head-to-head. Miami beat Pittsburgh in the 1972 AFC title game, but that was not the same team Pittsburgh fielded a few years later.

JB: The '78 Steelers team was more mature. And the game of football was evolving before our eyes, even from early in that decade until the end of it. And, as Edwin said, then you take away Csonka, Kiick, and Warfield and it's a whole different story. So when the Steelers really matured and kicked into championship form, the Dolphins were not at their best. But here's one thing I want to say about comparing these two teams: en route to Super Bowl VII, Miami won by six points [over Cleveland] in one playoff game and by four [over Pittsburgh] in the next. They weren't exactly dominant and maybe that's why some people hesitate or question their potential as the most dominant Super Bowl champion. We tend to get excited when a team rolls up a lot of points.

Well, the '78 Steelers won their two playoff games en route to Super Bowl XIII by 23 points and 29 points, beating Denver and Houston in back-to-back weeks. And I think that was kind of an exclamation point, if you will, to the type of season they had. And then they won the Super Bowl against Dallas, 35-31, in one of the most thrilling Super Bowls ever. If you look at the average margin of victory in all eight of their playoff games en route to those four Super Bowl titles, it's something like 17 points. The dominance they had, not only week-to-week but

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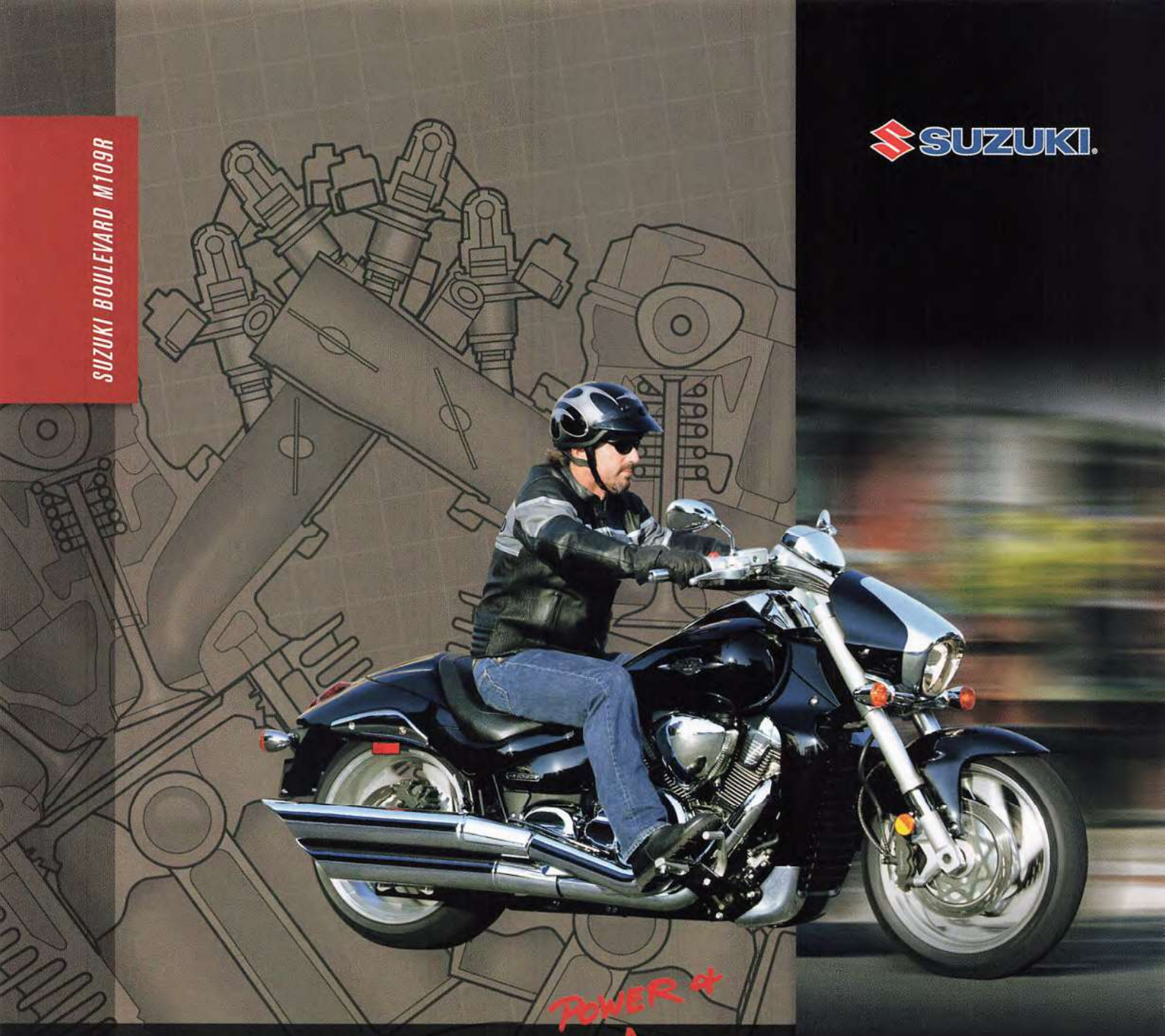

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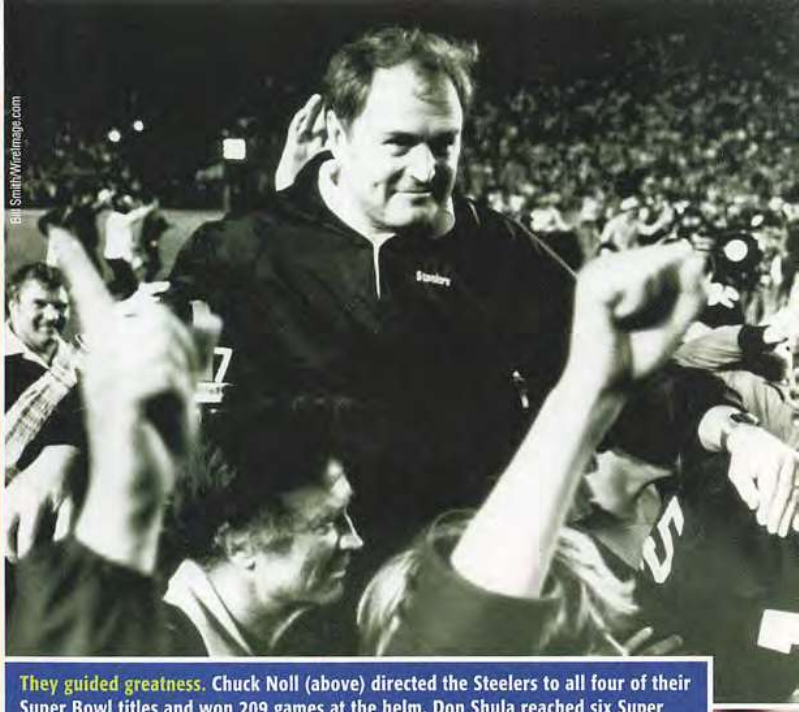
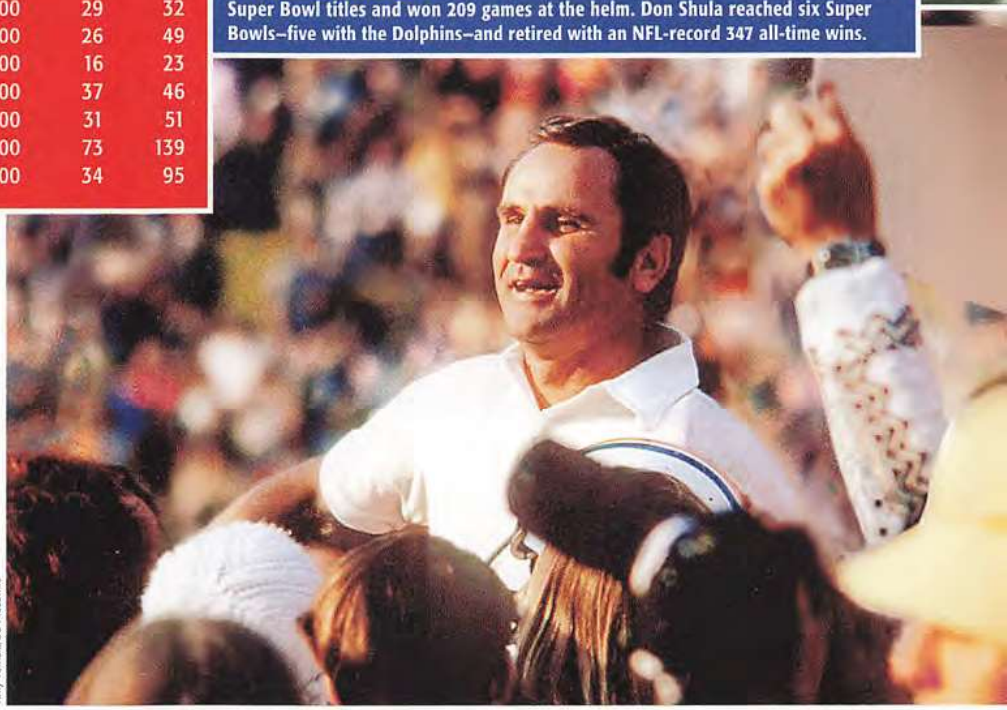
All-Time Super Bowl Records

Team	W	L	Pct	Pts	OP
San Francisco 49ers	5	0	1.000	188	89
Dallas Cowboys	5	3	.625	221	132
Pittsburgh Steelers	4	1	.800	120	100
Green Bay Packers	3	1	.750	127	76
New England Patriots	3	2	.600	107	148
Oakland/L.A. Raiders	3	2	.600	132	114
Washington Redskins	3	2	.600	122	103
New York Giants	2	1	.667	66	73
Miami Dolphins	2	3	.400	74	103
Denver Broncos	2	4	.333	115	206
Baltimore Ravens	1	0	1.000	34	7
Chicago Bears	1	0	1.000	46	10
New York Jets	1	0	1.000	16	7
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	1	0	1.000	48	21
Indianapolis/Baltimore Colts	1	1	.500	23	29
Kansas City Chiefs	1	1	.500	33	42
St. Louis/L.A. Rams	1	2	.333	59	67
Atlanta Falcons	0	1	.000	19	34
Carolina Panthers	0	1	.000	29	32
San Diego Chargers	0	1	.000	26	49
Tennessee Titans	0	1	.000	16	23
Cincinnati Bengals	0	2	.000	37	46
Philadelphia Eagles	0	2	.000	31	51
Buffalo Bills	0	4	.000	73	139
Minnesota Vikings	0	4	.000	34	95


Bill Smith/WireImage.com

They guided greatness. Chuck Noll (above) directed the Steelers to all four of their Super Bowl titles and won 209 games at the helm. Don Shula reached six Super Bowls–five with the Dolphins–and retired with an NFL-record 347 all-time wins.


Tony Tomsic/US Presswire

against other playoff teams, was something you came to respect about them.

EP: I have no quarrel about considering any of Pittsburgh's four championship teams as the greatest team, but I still think the '72 Dolphins were better. It's very tough comparing teams—even from six years apart. Size was becoming more and more of a factor and the game was evolving. Do I think the '78 Steelers would beat the '72 Dolphins if you put them out there in '78? I think they would. But not in 1972. It's the sort of argument that will never be settled.

CE: What was it like to be around the Dolphins as their undefeated streak started getting attention in the press?

EP: Howard Schnellenberger, the offensive coordinator for that team, once said that when things were going good, nobody was harder to work for in the world than Shula, and when things were going bad, there was nobody easier. So Shula was just a growling bear that whole season. He had lost two Super Bowls [one as head coach of the Colts and the other with the Dolphins the previous season], and he knew that they had a shot at winning in 1972. But I don't think they gave any real thought to going undefeated, other than what it would do to enhance their chances to reach the Super Bowl.

CE: Is one of the reasons people tend to overlook the '72 Dolphins because, whenever we see their Super Bowl highlights, all that is ever shown is a negative play? In other Super Bowls, we see highlights of great touchdowns. But Super Bowl VII, all you ever see is placekicker Garo Yepremian's blooper that resulted in Washington's only score near the end of the game. You don't see Griese's TD pass to Howard Twilley that opened the scoring or even Kiick's rushing touchdown.

JB: Had Yepremian made the field goal, Miami would have won, 17-0. How poetic would it have been for the undefeated 17-0 team to pitch a shutout by that score in the Super Bowl?

EP: That's right, and it still bothers those guys. It's something the team considers unfortunate.

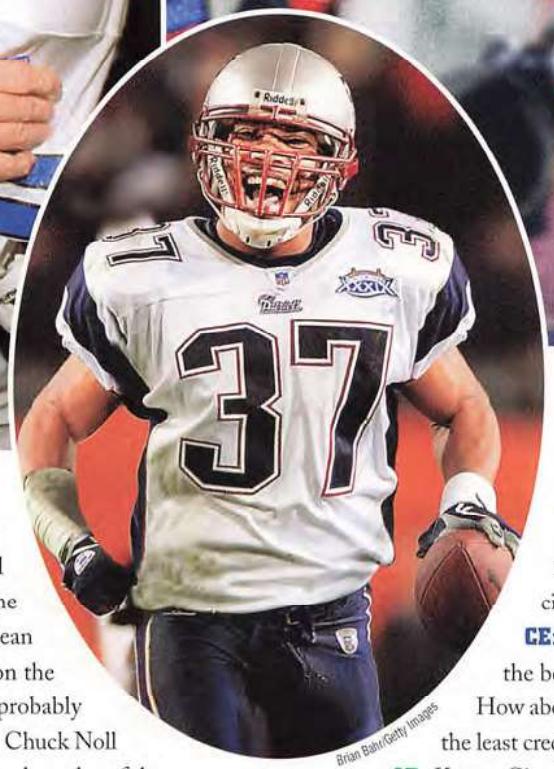
CE: Did that Dolphins team play anyone with the offensive firepower equal to the '78 Steelers?

EP: I don't think there was any team in the league in 1972 with that kind of firepower, though the Dolphins did face some pretty good teams to start off the season—Kansas City, Minnesota, the Jets, and Houston. After that, they didn't have any problem. But there was no team like the '78 Steelers on their schedule.

CE: Who were the most under-appreciated players on these teams?

More greatness to consider. Below: Dallas head coach Jim Johnson and QB Troy Aikman celebrate the Cowboys' Super Bowl XXVIII triumph. Jerry Rice (right) played on four of the 49ers' Super Bowl championship teams. Rodney Harrison (inset) and the 2004 Patriots made a strong statement to be ranked among the best Super Bowl champions of all time.

Charles Krupa/AP WWP



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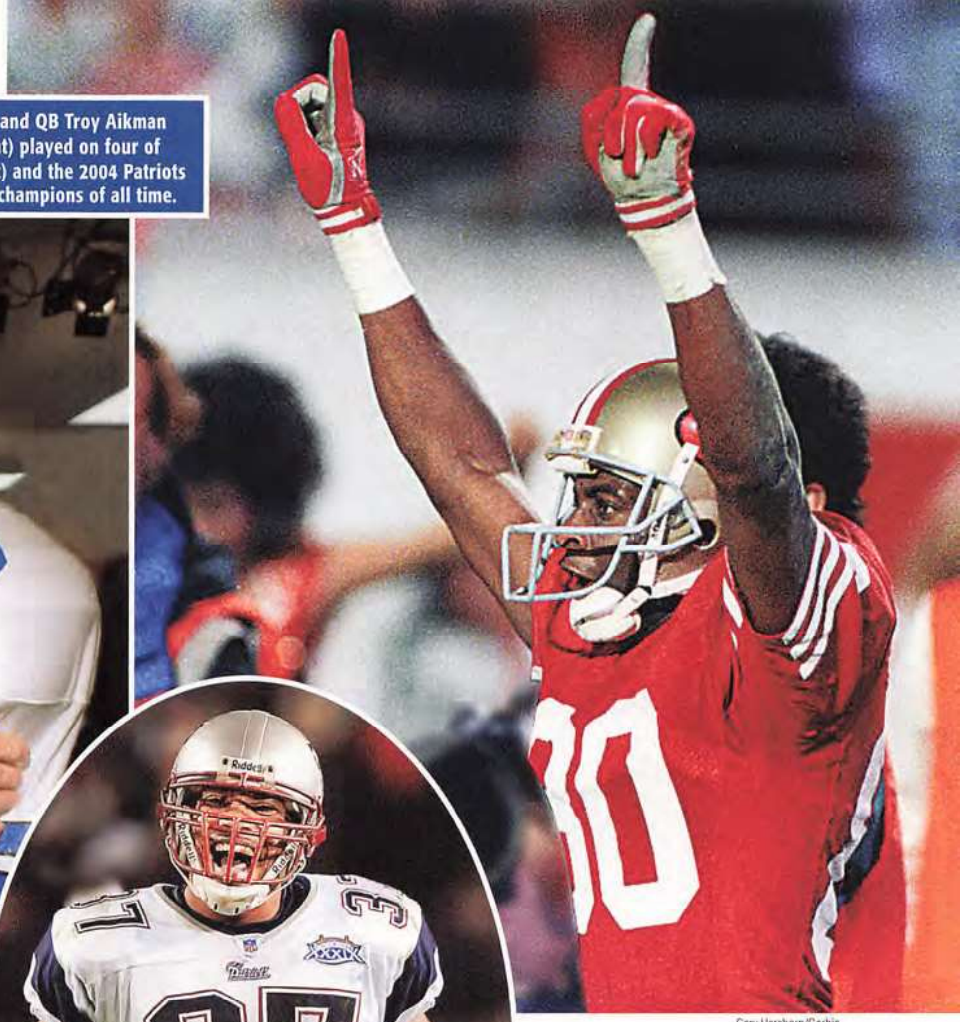

Gary Hershorn/Corbis

JB: When you talk about the Steelers, again you're talking about nine players in the Hall of Fame. So it seems like everybody got their due. But there are still guys like Andy Russell, who was there for part of the dynasty, and L.C. Greenwood, who played next to Mean Joe Greene. Greenwood's name has been advanced on the Hall of Fame ballot for a number of years. You can probably look back and wonder about the assistant coaches, too. Chuck Noll and Don Shula, of course, are both in the Hall of Fame, but a lot of the assistant coaches don't get their due. That's one place to look when you're talking about under-appreciation.

EP: Absolutely. But I believe the least appreciated for the Dolphins was Bob Kuechenberg. You can make a great argument that they had the best offensive middle in the history of pro football with Jim Langer at center and Larry Little and Kuechenberg as the two guards. Langer and Little are in the Hall. Kuechenberg isn't but should be, so I'd say that he was probably underappreciated. The other guy people don't remember is a big part of history—Bob Matheson.

JB: Fifty-three!

EP: Right. His number was 53, and the "53" defense was named after him. Bill Arnsparger, the Dolphins' defensive coordinator, lost two linemen in preseason, so he started using Matheson as a down lineman on a four-man line, or as a linebacker backing up a three-man line. And people started calling it the "53" defense simply because Matheson wore number 53. He was very valuable [68 tackles, four forced fumbles] and may have been the most underappreciated of all the Dolphins.

CE: We've spent a lot time discussing the best Super Bowl teams of all time. How about the Super Bowl team that gets the least credit?

JB: Kansas City in Super Bowl IV…that team got overshadowed after all the excitement about the Jets the year before. The Jets became the first AFL team to win the Super Bowl when they beat the Colts, and the next year Kansas City wins…

EP: …And the Jets had taken that edge off. It's a very good point.

JB: There were some great Chiefs teams in that era…with guys like Bobby Bell, Buck Buchanan, and Len Dawson.

EP: This may sound very contentious, but I would still say the 1972 Dolphins. An awful lot of Hall of Fame selectors and historians of the game just don't put the Dolphins in the top five, so I would certainly nominate them for most underappreciated as well. ■

Craig Ellenport is a content manager for Digital Media and Publishing at the NFL. He is co-editor of The Super Bowl: An Official Retrospective, *published last November by Ballantine Books.*

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Coordinating

by Vic Carucci

Assistant coaches play a quiet, yet vital, role for teams that reach the Super Bowl. For some, the game's brilliant spotlight showcases these efforts...and opens the door for head coaching opportunities.

They are seen, but seldom heard.
You know their names.
You know of their contributions and accomplishments.
But your focus is somewhere else.
There is the head coach, and then the assistants. In that order. Always.

When it comes to the Super Bowl, the spotlight almost never deviates from the men at the top: Vince Lombardi, Tom Landry, Don Shula, Chuck Noll, Bill Walsh, Joe Gibbs, Bill Parcells, Bill Belichick.

There is no individual who receives more credit for the victory—or blame for the loss—than the head coach. Fair or not, his is the most lasting face, voice, and, especially, mind that we attach to the outcome.

Multiple wins usually result in him being labeled a "genius." Multiple losses can cause him to be described as a coach who "just can't win the big one."

However, coaching is hardly a one-man job. For every highly successful head coach, there is at least one outstanding top assistant, and usually two...or more.

That point was driven home again in Super Bowl XXXIX when New England won the game, but immediately lost its two top assistant coaches. Minutes after defeating the Eagles, defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel received a much-anticipated phone call from the Cleveland Browns and officially became their new head coach. Several weeks earlier, offensive coordinator Charlie Weis had been hired as head coach at Notre Dame, although he stayed aboard for the Patriots' playoff run.

Across the field, Eagles head coach Andy Reid boasted his own impressive pair of lead assistants—defensive coordinator Jim Johnson and offensive coordinator Brad Childress, who recently landed the Vikings' head coaching position. The trio guided Philly to four straight NFC title games and, finally, the Super Bowl.

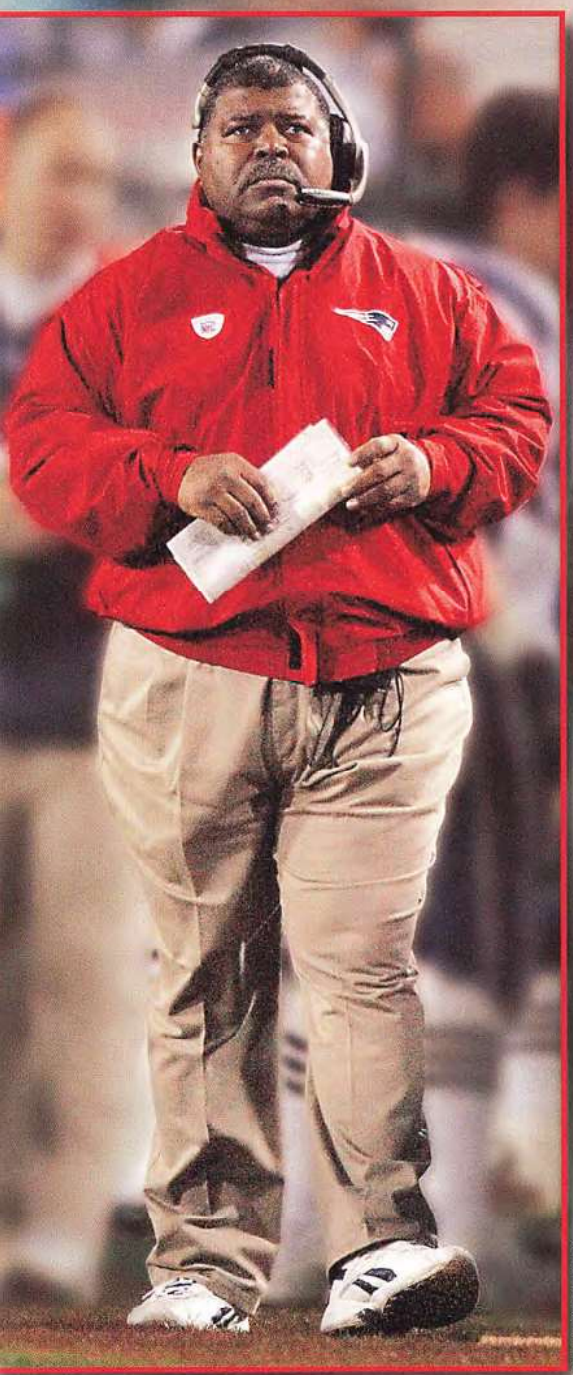
"The big thing is I've progressed in my career," says Crennel, who, in addition to winning three Super Bowl rings under Belichick, captured two as an assistant coach for Parcells' Giants. "I've gone from assistant coach, to coordinator, to head coach, and at each stop I've taken on more responsibility. I've had a good training ground."

Some would say it's the best training any assistant coach could get, since Belichick has a well-earned reputation for having the most thoroughly prepared team on the field. With the head coach at his side, Crennel taught Patriots defenders the intricacies of a complex scheme that allowed them to contour to whatever an opposing offense threw their way. It was an approach that also kept New England's defense among the NFL's best, even when it lost talented players.

Crennel was instrumental in Belichick's decision to take one of the all-time coaching risks when the Patriots knocked off the heavily favored Rams in Super Bowl XXXVI. And he did it by keeping New England's defensive risks to a minimum. When the Patriots met St. Louis in Foxborough during the regular season—a 24-17 Rams' win—they frequently

Carlos Osorio/AP WWP

Success



David Drapkin/Getty Images

The architect of the Patriots' Super Bowl success, Bill Belichick (right) originally gained acclaim as defensive coordinator for the Giants' two championship squads. Now, his two lead assistants during New England's recent title run—Charlie Weis (left, with Tom Brady) and Romeo Crennel (above)—are head coaches themselves.

Brian Bahr/Getty Images

blitzed QB Kurt Warner. The approach made perfect sense, considering all the creative blitz schemes Belichick and Crennel had in their playbook, and the fact they were facing a pocket passer in an offense that liked to throw the ball.

But when they met again in the Super Bowl, the Patriots reversed field 180 degrees. Their defense was conservative and physical, and that had as much to do with the Patriots' 20-17 win as Tom Brady's MVP performance or Adam Vinatieri's last-second field goal.

Prior to the game, former Giants quarterback and current CBS analyst Phil Simms never considered that the Patriots might use such a tactic.

"But it sure made sense as I watched it," Simms says. "Throw off the rhythm of the quarterback. Make him hold the ball just a little bit longer.

"Warner's not quite as effective a thrower when you make him hold it. The less aggressive approach gives your defense more time to get to the quarterback, so you get more hits. And no matter who you are, when the hits start piling up, your decision-making isn't as good. Remember, the Patriots scored on an interception in that game, too.

"It's the same as in any business," continues Simms. "Sometimes you've got to take a chance to go along with all of your studying and all of your knowledge. There's always going to have to be some risk-taking to make something great, and that especially holds true for coaches in the Super Bowl."

Similar to Crennel, Weis benefited from that same education (and success) under Belichick and Parcells. With the Patriots, Weis would become the mentor to Brady, who in only his second NFL season was thrust into the starting lineup after an injury to Drew Bledsoe. Brady performed magnificently during that 2001 campaign, and has continued to improve to the point where he now rates among the game's best signal-callers.

Few offensive coordinators did a better job of keeping opponents guessing than Weis. In one game, he might call 20 straight pass plays. In another, he might pound away on the ground all game long.

Typical of Weis was the way he adjusted the Patriots' attack in Super Bowl XXXIX. After the New England offense struggled to handle Philadelphia's relentless blitzing in the first quarter—thanks to the outstanding defensive scheming of Johnson—Weis decided to use the Eagles' aggressiveness against them. He went with four-receiver formations and called screen passes that he thought could be effective with the linebackers and safeties out of position to defend them and the entire Philly secondary occupied in coverage.

The gamble paid off: the Patriots drove for TDs on three of their next five possessions.

"In the four years we worked together, I can't remember [Weis] calling a screen out of a four-wide formation," Brady says. "But that's Charlie. Expect the unexpected."

Belichick himself lived in the enormous shadow of Parcells while helping the Giants win a pair of Super Bowls nearly two decades ago. As Parcells' defensive coordinator, he constructed some brilliant game plans, including the one that handcuffed the Bills' seemingly unstoppable no-huddle offense in Super Bowl XXV. That game plan ended up on display at the Pro Football Hall of Fame. It was a testament to a coach with an incredible work ethic.

"Bill watches every inch of tape," affirms Pepper Johnson, New England's defensive line coach. "He doesn't just say, 'We have to have a big game on special teams,' and walk out of the room. He says, 'This is who we need to block. This guy has speed. This guy makes tackles.'"

"He is somewhat of a mad scientist," says Patriots safety Rodney Harrison. "There is not one detail he overlooks."

There is a mental picture of Belichick—from his days as a defensive coordinator with the Giants—that has forever burned itself in Simms' memory.

"I was getting ready to leave the stadium at about 7:30 one night," Simms recalls. "I walked to the back of our complex to pick up a videotape and I heard this noise coming from one of the meeting rooms. I opened the door and there was coach Belichick riding a stationary bike while watching film of the upcoming opponent.

"It captured him as a person. He was not going to take time away from preparation to exercise, so he found a way to do both simultaneously. He wore a rubber top so he would sweat more. He sweated so much that the bike rusted to the point where one of the Giants' equipment guys had to throw it away."

Still, Belichick continued to operate in relative obscurity. In his first head-coaching

Sean Brady/Wirelmage.com

The Eagles' Jim Johnson is one of the league's most respected defensive coaches.

"The thing I've always admired about [Jim Johnson] is he does a great job of taking away the opponent's number one option and making them beat you with other options."

— Ike Reese, former Eagles linebacker, praising the team's defensive coordinator

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gig—five years at the helm of the Browns—he had a 36-44 regular-season record, was 1-1 in the playoffs, and became generally regarded as an assistant in over his head in the top job.

Head coaches and assistants who have won the Super Bowl share one thing in common with coaches who win at any level: great preparation.

However, after leading the Patriots to three Super Bowl victories in four seasons, Belichick has taken his place among the greatest coaches in football history. In terms of X's and O's and assembling an efficient organization, Belichick is as good as it gets and arguably as good as there ever has been. He has built the Patriots into a team with a remarkable ability to get meaningful production from its entire roster.

The same could be said about Reid, who has benefited considerably from the presence of Johnson and Childress. Johnson is known for aggressive schemes that pressure a QB by sending pass rushers from every imaginable angle.

"The thing I've always admired about him is he does a great job of taking away the opponent's number one option and making them beat you with other options," says former Philadelphia linebacker Ike Reese, now a member of the Atlanta Falcons.

"If you go to Jim Johnson, ask him how many times I've come up to him and told him I thought he's one of the best coaches in the NFL," Weis says. "Not just defensive coordinators, but all coaches."

One day after Reid became the Eagles' head coach in 1999, he hired Childress as his quarterbacks coach. Reid assigned him to help make a star out of the team's first-round draft pick that year, quarterback Donovan McNabb.

Mission accomplished.

"We came in here together, and we matured and developed into this offense," says McNabb, a five-time Pro Bowl selection. "[Childress] did wonders for us and put us in a great position to be successful."

In Minnesota, the 49-year-old Childress will get the opportunity to work with Daunte Culpepper, another of the league's elite QBs.

When Belichick was an assistant, he followed the Parcells credo that assistant coaches should be seen and not heard. After becoming a head coach, he adopted that same policy of not allowing assistant coaches to speak with the media without the head coach's permission (which isn't often granted). Parcells and Belichick prefer that their coaching staff speak with only one voice—the head coach's.

Some around the league have questioned whether this restricted media exposure has prevented assistants on these respective staffs from getting a head-coaching break sooner. Crennel was 57 years old when he took over the Browns, but he doesn't hold a grudge against Parcells or Belichick for keeping him away from the media for most of his NFL career. In fact, he has put the same rules in place in Cleveland.

"Every team has a different philosophy about how they want to run their program," Crennel says. "Parcells has a 'one-voice' philosophy and so does Belichick. The players say what they want to say, but when the organization speaks, the head coach speaks for it."

Head coaches and assistants who have won the Super Bowl share one thing in common with coaches who win at any level: great preparation.

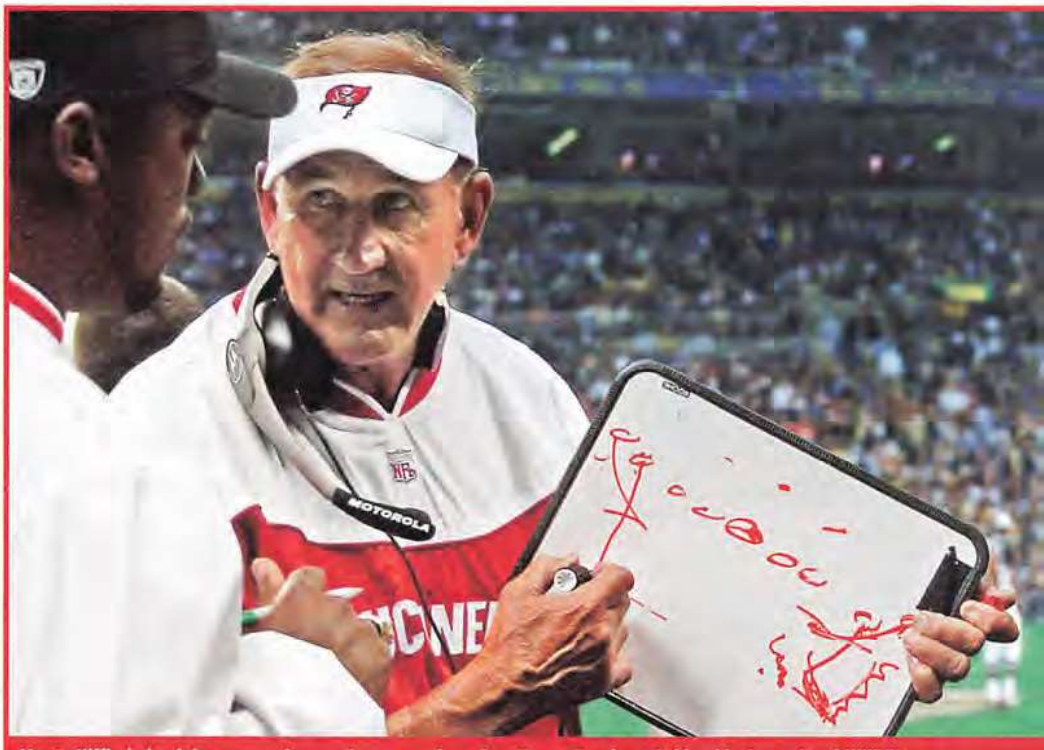
There might not have been a team more ready to dominate a Super Bowl than the Tampa Bay Buccaneers before they crushed the Raiders, 48-21, in Super Bowl XXXVII. Buccaneers head coach Jon Gruden not only knew exactly what his team had to do to win the game, he also knew exactly how to attack the club he had coached the previous season.

As the designer of a Raiders' offense that still was using a good portion of the playbook he authored, Gruden possessed valuable knowledge to share with the Bucs' defense—which ranked No. 1 in the NFL that year—in the week leading up to the Super Bowl.

On the flight to San Diego, he huddled with his defensive coordinator, Monte Kiffin, to discuss some of the pass patterns he expected the Raiders to run, as well as their offensive buzzwords and code words. Gruden had information on Oakland quarterback and league MVP Rich Gannon, right down to how his snap count would sound. Gruden even imitated Gannon while stepping in at quarterback—a position he played at the University of Dayton—on Tampa Bay's scout-team offense.

Sure enough, the Bucs' defense did plenty to make Gannon and the NFL's top-ranked offense look utterly horrendous. After throwing only 10 interceptions the entire regular season, Gannon threw five in the Super Bowl, including three that were returned for touchdowns. He finished with a passer rating of 48.9—light years below his season mark of 97.3.

At times, it seemed that the headsets of Kiffin and the rest of the Buccaneers' defensive coaching staff were plugged into the Raiders' communication system. Tampa Bay's defense



Al Messerschmidt/Wirelmage.com

Monte Kiffin helped draw up an impressive game plan when Tampa Bay beat Oakland in Super Bowl XXXVII.

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John Fox (left) and Marvin Lewis were opposing defensive coordinators in Super Bowl XXXV. Buddy Ryan was saluted by the Bears' defense following their Super Bowl XX win.

showed remarkable anticipation—formations, adjustments, and the plays that were called repeatedly looked like the right thing to do at the right time.

As then-Bucs safety John Lynch, who wore a wireless microphone for television, said on the sideline late in the first half, "Every play they've run, we've run in practice."

Several other notable Super Bowl-winning coordinators have gone on to become head coaches. The list includes three from the 49ers—George Seifert (defensive coordinator), Mike Holmgren and Mike Shanahan (both offensive coordinators)—along with Buddy Ryan (defensive coordinator, Bears), Norv Turner (offensive coordinator, Cowboys), and Marvin Lewis (defensive coordinator, Ravens). Mike Martz went from the Rams' offensive coordinator when they won Super Bowl XXXIV to head coach when the team returned to the big game two years later.

Winning the Super Bowl isn't the only prerequisite. John Fox, defensive coordinator for the Giants' Super Bowl XXXV squad, became head coach of the Panthers and took them to Super Bowl XXXVIII. And Lovie Smith, the defensive coordinator for the Rams under Martz, took over in Chicago and led the Bears to this year's NFC North crown.

Ryan was part of an unforgettable scene after the Bears overwhelmed the Patriots in Super Bowl XX. While a group of players carried head coach Mike Ditka off the field on their shoulders, another group did the same with Ryan, who soon after became head coach of the Eagles and later the Arizona Cardinals.

Holmgren was San Francisco's quarterbacks coach under Walsh, was promoted to offensive coordinator when Seifert took the reins, and eventually won a Super Bowl of his own as head coach of Green Bay. He's now trying to do the same in Seattle.

When Holmgren installed a game plan for the 49ers—showing each play and its corresponding number on an overhead projector—he always exuded confidence.

Crennel would love nothing better than to see the two coordinators he hired in Cleveland—Maurice Carthon on offense and Todd Grantham on defense—eventually become head coaches themselves.

For instance, this was a typical presentation he'd give on a pass play designed to have Joe Montana throw to Jerry Rice, who would blow past a defensive back trying to cover him one-on-one over the middle: "Picture Number Seventy-Three is going to be a touchdown Sunday. Pay attention, men. It's called '76 X Shallow Cross.' Roger Craig's going in motion to the weak side. The free safety is going to jump the tight end on the hook route, and Jerry Rice is going to be there for a touchdown. It's going to happen, men. Circle it now. Star it. It's a touchdown."

Confident. Concise. Crystal clear.

Recalls Gruden, who was then a young assistant for the 49ers, "I would sit there and go, 'Man, it's seven to nothing already. What's the next picture?'"

In 2000, Lewis guided the Ravens' defense to one of the most dominant performances the NFL has ever seen. The unit allowed the fewest points (165) and fewest rushing yards (60.6 per game) over a 16-game schedule in league history.

Months before that season began, Lewis, now head coach of the Bengals, identified three critical areas that Baltimore's defense needed to upgrade: take-aways, third downs, and red-zone defense.

"We hit every one of them," Lewis says with a proud smile.

Crennel would love nothing better than to see the two coordinators he hired in Cleveland—Maurice Carthon on offense and Todd Grantham on defense—eventually become head coaches themselves. Yet he knows the only way that will likely happen is for the Browns to enjoy the sort of success that he was part of with the Giants and Patriots.

"As an assistant, sometimes your labor is not recognized, so you have to take pride in the way your players perform on the field," Crennel says. "Winning gives you the opportunity to be recognized. If we can win, we will be able to help those guys maybe have the opportunity that I had." ■

Vic Carucci is the national editor of NFL.com. He has covered the NFL for 27 years and is past president of the Professional Football Writers of America. He's authored seven books. His most recent, Sunday Morning Quarterback, *written with Phil Simms, is now available in paperback.*

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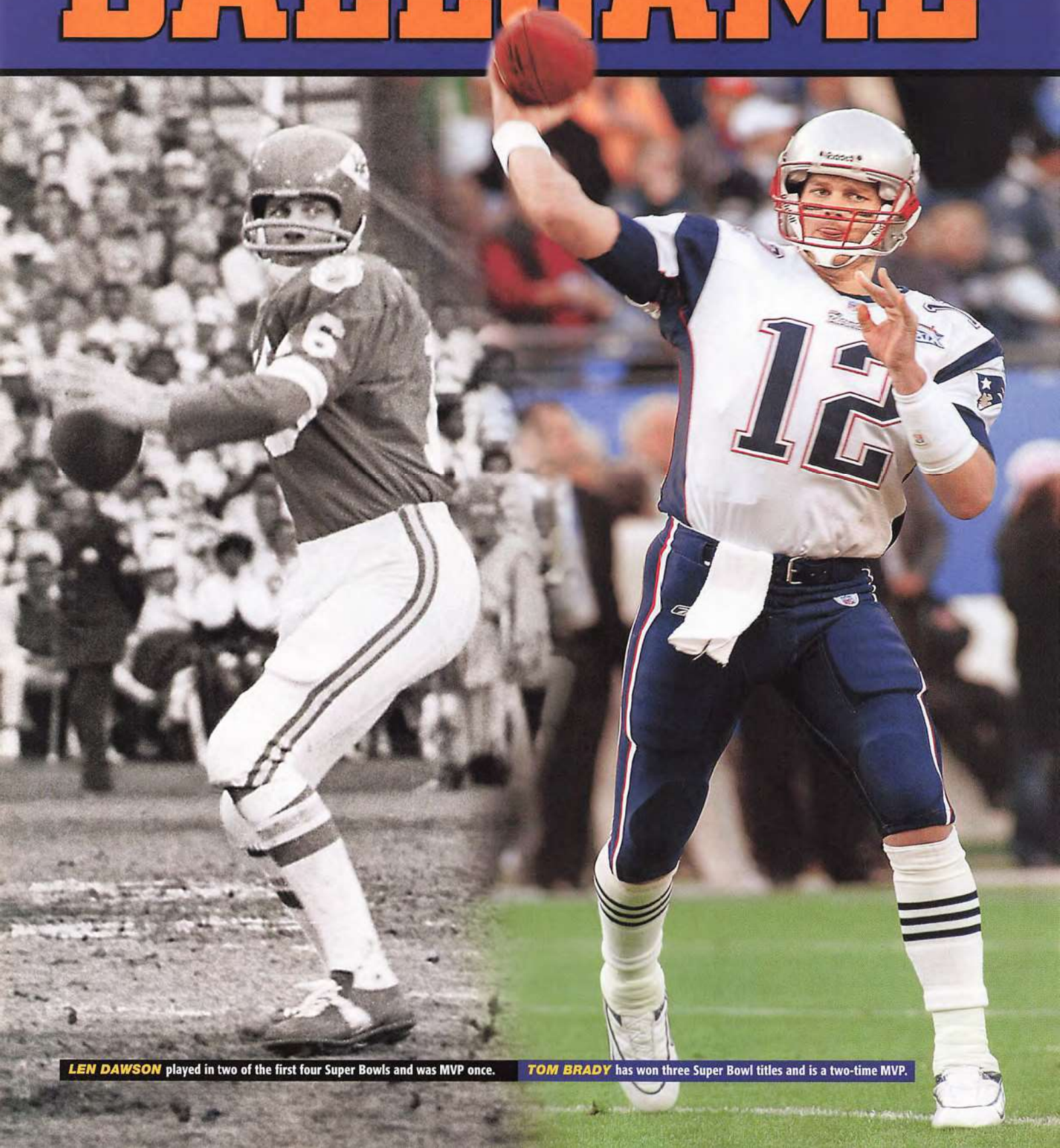


LEN DAWSON played in two of the first four Super Bowls and was MVP once.

TOM BRADY has won three Super Bowl titles and is a two-time MVP.

Pro football and the Super Bowl have evolved over the past 40 years.

He played in Super Bowl I. He was the MVP of Super Bowl IV. And now Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Len Dawson is our tour director for Super Bowl XL, answering your questions and leading us through four decades of changes to pro football's signature event.

by Clark Judge

"You mean the changes in pageantry?" Dawson asks as he settles into a chair, curious about his role as an armchair quarterback.

Not exactly, Len. We know that when the AFL-champion Chiefs met the NFL-champion Green Bay Packers on January 15, 1967, there were no pyrotechnics, no Sting, no Cher, and, mercifully, no Super Bowl Shuffle.

Okay, so there was a question of Paul playing, but it was Hornung, not McCartney.

We know that the crowds then were smaller. The players were smaller. The rosters were smaller. The paychecks were smaller. The media, the hype, the TV audience…everything about the game was smaller.

But then something happened. What once was a championship football game became an extraordinary international event, viewed by hundreds of millions of fans everywhere.

"It all happened gradually," says former linebacker Jim Lynch, who teamed with Dawson, "but if you were to 'Rip Van Winkle it' and wake up to today's game you'd say, 'My gosh, there's been an unbelievable change.'"

He's not talking about the pageantry. He's talking about how the game is played. How the players are used. Where they line up. How they attack each other. It was all so different then.

Dawson is here to tell you how different, and he's joined by Lynch, Green Bay quarterback Bart Starr, Packers wide receiver Boyd Dowler, Chiefs linebacker Willie Lanier, and Hall of Fame coach Bill Walsh. Now let's end the roll call and allow Len to break this huddle.

THE LINE-UPS

Watch this year's Super Bowl, and you may see three or four players leave the sidelines at once to jog on to the field as replacements for the next play. It may be on offense, but, more often, it's on defense where coordinators change alignments and schemes depending on the situation. Let's say they start in a base defense, with four linemen, three linebackers, and four defensive backs. Then they remove a linebacker on second-and-long, substituting a defensive back. On third-and-long, they maneuver again, this time replacing another linebacker with a defensive back and sending in one or two pass rushers.

"That just didn't happen years ago," says Lanier, also part of that Super Bowl IV championship team. "All of us were familiar with the same people on the field every single play."

They'd sometimes resort to a fifth defensive back, but it wasn't much more complicated than that.

"We'd laugh and say our pass defense was basically, 'Look out for the pass,'" says Lynch. "We were not a team that got into prevent defenses. We started the same 11 guys for every game."

So did the Packers—on offense and defense. Dowler recalled that when the club went to two tight ends, he simply shifted inside. There were no gimmicks, no deception. He moved over and stayed in the game.

"Whoever started on the offensive series stayed in there until you scored or gave up the football," says Dawson. "Defensively, it was the same thing. Very few teams used three wide receivers, and none used four.

"The tight end was always involved. Even though Fred Arbanas [the Chiefs' tight end] was legally blind in one eye, he stayed in the game regardless of the situation. That part has really changed. It's now a lot like basketball, getting the right people in there at the right time to complement each other."

In Super Bowl I, that right person was Green Bay's Max McGee, the unlikely MVP after he replaced the injured Dowler. McGee collected seven catches for 138 yards and two TDs—all after sitting for most of the 1966 season, when he made a grand total of four receptions.

"Obviously, we didn't have multiple substitutions," recalls Starr, "but coach [Vince] Lombardi was such a fabulous teacher we were extremely well prepared for every game, and we had an unselfish group of players. And [McGee] played like gangbusters."

THE PLAY CALLING

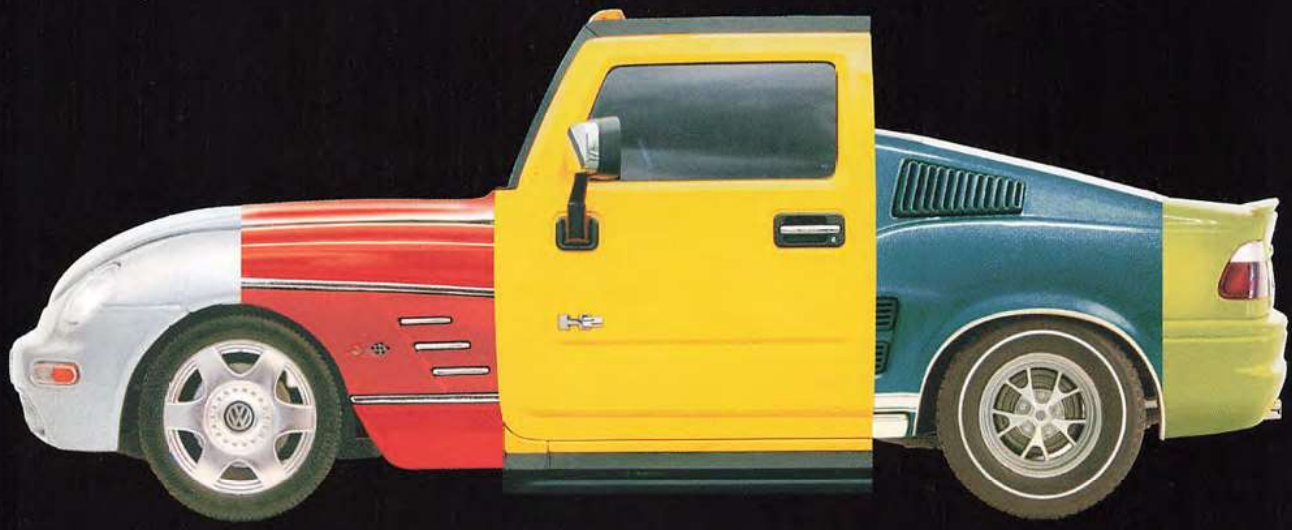
You're Tom Brady, and you're about to make a call on second-and-4 at the New England 42. What do you do?

You listen. Instructions go from a sideline coach into an earpiece inside your helmet, and what you hear is then passed on to your teammates. And that's the play you run.

MAX McGEE saved his biggest catches for the biggest game–Super Bowl I. He had two TD grabs in Green Bay's win.

left to right: Bettmann/Corbis, Kevin Terrell/Wireimage.com

Different people, different tastes...



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You've come a long way, Brady.

"I called most of our plays," says Dawson, whose career spanned 17 seasons and four teams. "Of course, [Chiefs head coach] Hank Stram was an offensive-minded coach, so he'd occasionally send in a play. And when I went to the sidelines, he would make suggestions. But we had a game plan, and the quarterback was out there to call the plays."

That practice stopped decades ago, with head coaches and offensive coordinators taking over for their passers and now limiting them to a few audibles at the line of scrimmage. These days, assistants sit in a closed box high above the field, studying the game as you might study a chess board, then relay their observations—and, often, the next call—to the sidelines.

For the quarterback, it can be an information overload, and it doesn't stop when he reaches the bench. He might sit down with a coach to discuss the last series or get on a telephone connecting him with an assistant upstairs. Or he might review black-and-white photos that reveal how his opponents attacked a previous play.

"[Today's] quarterback is asked to do more," says Walsh, who won three Super Bowls with San Francisco. "I really preferred the game when the quarterback called the plays; when there were one or two substitutions and when the fans recognized all the players."

Dawson recognized all the players in the Kansas City huddle, because the faces seldom changed. He stood and faced them, and they stared back. He was their maestro; they were his orchestra awaiting the next cue.

"You had the responsibility of calling the right play," he says. "It also gave you leadership ability. You were in control. You're not out there listening in your helmet to what somebody's telling you to do, with the rest of the guys looking around.

"It's getting in the huddle and saying, 'This is what I want to do, and how can we block it?' If I asked that question and got a response, that's the way I went, because I knew one thing: that guy who gave me the suggestion was going to bust his butt to accomplish what he was supposed to."

Starr consulted his offensive linemen before changing a call in the 1967 NFL Championship Game with Dallas, more often remembered as "The Ice Bowl." With 16 seconds left, and the Packers—who trailed, 17-14—at the Cowboys 1, he took a timeout, jogged to the sidelines, and spoke to Lombardi about the next play.

It was supposed to be an inside handoff to Chuck Mercein.

"I asked the linemen if they could get footing for a wedge play, and they said, 'Yes,'" Starr recalls. "But our backs were having a tough time getting to the line of scrimmage. So I told coach Lombardi what I was going to do, and he said, 'Just do it, and let's get the heck out of here.'"

The Packers did, shortly after Starr scored on a quarterback keeper.

OFFENSIVE SCHEMES

It was all so much simpler then. The players weren't as big. They weren't as fast. They weren't as strong. They weren't as numerous, either, with rosters held at 40 (compared to today's 53-man rosters and practice squad on top of that). This all meant there were fewer substitutions.

"Things were very simple," says Dowler. "We had a few personnel packages, but they were pretty basic. After the first one or two weeks of training camp, I never looked at my playbook."

That was the beauty of the game. The players were basically the same, and the plays were basically the same. So when Lynch studied the Vikings prior to Super Bowl IV, there were no mysteries.

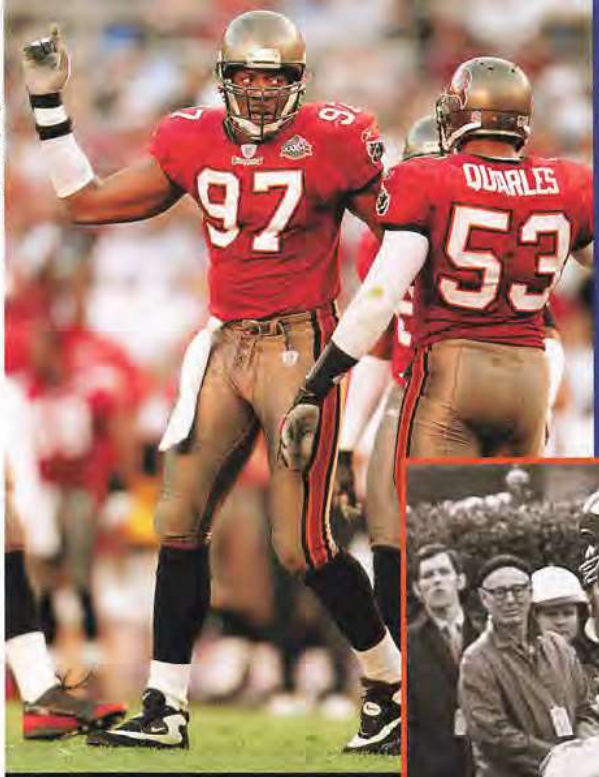
"They had a brown offense and a red offense," he says. "The red had split backs; in the brown they were in tandem. Other than that, they didn't do much different."

That didn't make them unusual. Green Bay was the same way. What the Packers did they did well, and they did it again and again and again. They could beat you with Starr or Dowler or Carroll Dale, but they preferred hammering you with their rushing attack. Sometimes it would be Hornung left. Sometimes it would be Jim Taylor right. And always there were pulling guards involved.

"You don't see that Lombardi sweep or the Packers' sweep anymore," says Dawson. "Teams still try to seal off, but they can't do it well because of the quickness of the guys out there on defense."

You see everything, on the other hand, with the passing game. It's more intricate, more complicated, and more sophisticated than it was 40 years ago. Where you wouldn't find four receivers on the field at one time in the 1960s, you may find five now, with a running back sometimes split wide. There is motion before the snap of the ball, with all sorts of shifting, and there are a variety of formations that can include a running back or wide receiver taking a direct snap from center.

"Coaches are depending more and more on multiple wide receivers," says Walsh, "and they don't protect the passer nearly as well because they don't have enough blockers much of the time. That means the quarterback has to be active and quick or he takes a real beating.



Brian Bahr/Getty Images

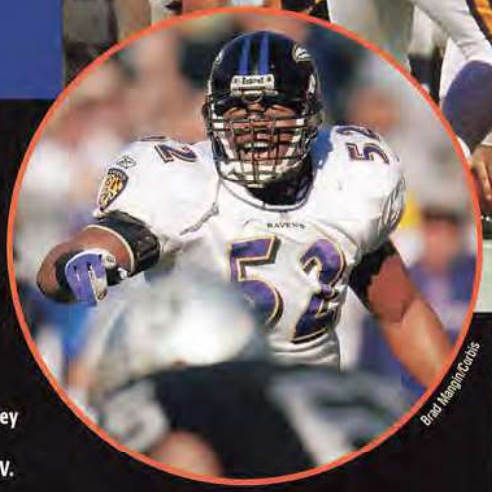
When **SIMEON RICE** and the Tampa Bay defense squared off against the Raiders in Super Bowl XXXVII, they dominated the league's top-ranked offense.

Darryl Norenberg/WireImage.com

Kansas City was patient against the Vikings' vaunted defense in Super Bowl IV, before springing **OTIS TAYLOR** for a 46-yard TD.

Sylvia Allen/Wirelmage.com

TERRY BRADSHAW and the Steelers mustered just enough offense to beat Minnesota's "Purple People Eaters" defense in Super Bowl IX.



Brad Mangin/Corbis

With game MVP **RAY LEWIS** showing the way, the Ravens' defense kept the Giants out of the end zone as they won Super Bowl XXXV.

"And people are throwing the ball much more [now]," adds Walsh, "and patterns are more complex, with receivers running across the field. In those days, the offenses were much more balanced."

It's borne out in the stats—in Super Bowl I, the Packers and Chiefs combined to throw the ball 56 times. In Miami's back-to-back triumphs in Super Bowls VII and VIII, Bob Griese threw a *total* of 18 passes. But last year's Super Bowl produced 84 throws, 51 of those by the Eagles' Donovan McNabb.

DEFENSIVE SCHEMES

Dawson roomed with free safety Johnny Robinson for Super Bowl IV, and on the eve of the game Robinson decided he needed an answer to something that had been eating at him all week.

"I've watched television and read the newspapers about this game," he told Dawson, "but I haven't had a chance to look at the Minnesota defense. Tell me: do we have any way to score against these people?"

Dawson nodded. Robinson had his answer.

"They didn't do anything fancy," Dawson says today. "It was just a matter of us taking advantage of their strengths and weaknesses."

The Vikings played your basic 4-3, with the accent on the front four. There were no zone blitzes. There were no dime backs. There were no corner or safety blitzes. There was, instead, a never-ending assault by the game's best defensive line, and while the four starters weren't all that big, they were quick and fast and murder on quarterbacks.

They were the "Purple People Eaters," and they devoured offenses. In 14 regular-season games in 1969, the Vikings scored 379 points; their opponents managed 133.

But that didn't faze Dawson. He believed the Chiefs could neutralize Minnesota's front four, particularly All-Pro defensive left end Carl Eller. And he knew that if they doubled Eller with a tackle and tight end, he'd have trouble raising his arms to deflect passes.

That, in turn, would provide Dawson a passing lane to his right, which was critical. Because Dawson also knew that if Minnesota blitzed the pocket, if the Vikings sent their linebackers or played their safeties close to the line of scrimmage, they risked an attack to the outside where they were vulnerable at cornerback.

And so it happened that all of those things coalesced in the third quarter when Dawson launched a quick sideline strike to Otis Taylor that the wide receiver turned into a game-clinching 46-yard touchdown.

"I happened to guess right on that particular play," says Dawson. "They had an all-out blitz. The safeties were up close, and I could see that. And they were coming. It was a quick pass, the only one I could've gotten off because they had more people coming at me than we had blocking. Fortunately, I had enough time to get the ball to Otis, and he broke a tackle. Then it was a straight-on shot down the sideline."

The frustration became common for the Vikings who, despite their heralded defense, added losses to the Dolphins, Steelers, and Raiders in subsequent Super Bowl appearances in the 1970s.

But in more recent Super Bowls, defenses have won those battles—the Bears' 46 defense in Super Bowl XX, the Ravens' smothering attack in Super Bowl XXXV, and the Buccaneers in Super Bowl XXXVII.

That Bucs-Raiders title game marked the first time the NFL's top offense and top defense had met in the Super Bowl. Yet what was supposed to be a chess match turned into a checkmate: Tampa Bay had five interceptions, scored three defensive TDs, and routed Oakland, 48-21.

Still, some things remain intact about the game. For all the technological advances, schematic differences, player movements, and rules changes made over the years, we still thrill to that straight-on shot down the sideline—whether it's Len Dawson making the throw in 1970 or Peyton Manning or Tom Brady replicating it 35 years later.

"When you think about it," says Starr, "we have the greatest sport in the world. Look at the numbers: you have 11 people at one time subordinating themselves for the cause of a team. Then it takes a certain mental and physical aspect that is very, very special. I just love it." ■

Clark Judge is a senior writer at CBS Sportsline and has more than two decades of experience covering the NFL. Prior to covering the league, he was a beat writer following the Baltimore Colts, San Diego Chargers, and San Francisco 49ers.

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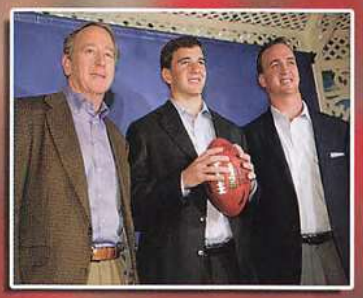

Passing it down

by Neil Amdur

From father to sons, the Manning family has a tradition of strong arms and stronger convictions.

Even before the storm, Archie Manning knew enough not to take anything for granted. A New Orleans resident for 34 years, Manning was in college at Ole Miss when the last fierce lady, Camille, left indelible prints on the Gulf Coast.

So after returning from a charity bowling tournament sponsored by his son Peyton in Indianapolis last August, Archie routinely checked for blindside weather blitzes from another possible intruder, Katrina.

At a preseason New Orleans Saints game that night, he thought to himself, "this could be the big one." But no one at the Superdome seemed panicked, and his wife, Olivia, went to a wedding the same evening and said nobody there was talking about the storm either.

"When we got home that night, I was listening to the news and turned on the Weather Channel," Manning recalls. "When I saw the [hurricane's] track, I said to Olivia, 'we're not taking any chances. We're getting out of here.'"

Among Archie Manning's many strengths as a pro quarterback over 14 seasons—the first 10 spent with the Saints—were vision and athleticism. He had the ability to read defenses, react, and survive long enough in the NFL to throw 125 TDs and run for 18 more. But even his careful precautions and early departure to a safer haven could not prepare him and his family for the double hit that struck New Orleans and Mississippi's Gulf Coast.

Hugh Quinn/American Red Cross

Brothers Eli (left) and Peyton Manning were hands-on with other volunteers in their contribution to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort.

Now, as the 2005 season winds down with the playing of Super Bowl XL, one set of unexpected statistics is coming to light: the impact that Hurricane Katrina had not only on the lives of one beleaguered football town, team, and its fans, but also on an entire league and country.

The sense of immense loss—personal and financial—was captured vividly with images and interviews that bombarded TV news programs. At the same time, seldom has a natural disaster generated such a spontaneous outpouring of support from the nation's sports establishment.

Among the three largest professional sports leagues, more than $40 million was raised for Hurricane Katrina relief, including more than $21 million from the NFL through individual, team, and player association donations, telethons, gate receipts, and countless other gestures of charity. Even two former presidents—George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton—were recruited to assist in the fundraising, similar to their efforts following the December 2004 tsunami.

"We thought it was important to make it clear that as with other disasters, including two years ago with the hurricanes in Florida and before that with 9/11, we will be responsive and try to be a leader in a constructive way," says NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue.

The efforts of NFL players ranged from a $250,000 donation by Louisiana native (and Atlanta Falcons running back) Warrick Dunn to the chartered plane organized by Peyton Manning, who flew with his brother Eli to Baton Rouge to distribute supplies to shelters. The pair then went on to New Orleans to inspect damage to their parents' house.

"I told them not to go into the city because it wasn't safe," Archie says. "But they went anyway."

How could they not? After watching parts of New Orleans reel from the unrelenting flow of water that destroyed parish districts—places where the brothers had once played countless summer baseball tournaments—family phone conversations turned into queries of "what can we do to help?"

Utilizing contacts with the Red Cross, sponsors, and friends, as well as his PeyBack Foundation, Peyton spearheaded the family's relief effort. In the final week of the exhibition season, Eli flew to Indianapolis and joined his brother for the chartered AirTran Airways flight that included 31,000 pounds of supplies.

"He did a great job of using his contacts, getting the plane, and getting it done," Eli says.

"My wife and I went in about a week later," Archie says of returning to their home in the city's Garden District. "I went into the house for three hours, and that's about all I could stand."

The city's football team couldn't come back at all. The Superdome, originally used as a shelter for thousands of New Orleans residents unable to leave town, had its roof so badly damaged by the pounding winds that the stadium was rendered unplayable. That sent the Saints on a season-long odyssey that included a "home opener" in East Rutherford, N.J., against the "visiting" Giants and then splitting their remaining home dates between San Antonio and Baton Rouge.

Still, if the Saints can emulate the strength, determination, and focus displayed by their former star quarterback and his family, they should be able to move forward. In describing the relationship of Archie and Peyton Manning in his introduction to *Manning* (HarperCollins, 2000), John Underwood writes, "they are as connected as pipeline."

The extension of that link surely now includes brother Eli, who as an improving second-year quarterback for the New York Giants has made the Mannings the new First Family of the NFL. It's also raised the specter of brother quarterbacks opposing each other in a regular-season game and possibly a Super Bowl, which would be a league first.

More than 300 sets of brothers have played in the NFL, and 15 sets have reached the Super Bowl, including Archie and Ray Griffin, who played for the Bengals in Super Bowl XVI, and Glenn and Lyle Blackwood, members of the Miami Dolphins in Super Bowl XIX.

Opposite page, top corner: Archie Manning with sons Eli and Peyton prior to the 2004 NFL Draft. In action, Peyton (No. 18) with the Colts, Archie (No. 8) from his playing days with the Saints, and Eli (No. 10) as a member of the N.Y. Giants.

Clockwise from top left: David Bergman/Corbis; Ronald Martinez/Getty Images; Al Messerschmidt/WireImage.com; Mark J. Rebilas/US Presswire

The brother act has deep roots as well. As far back as the 1920s, six Nesser brothers played in the league, including five for the Columbus Panhandles in 1921. More recently, Ross Browner and brothers Jim, Joey, and Keith were sprinkled on NFL rosters between 1978 and 1992. The Barber twins—Ronde and Tiki—continue to star for the Buccaneers and Giants, respectively, and three sets of quarterbacking brothers joined the Mannings on NFL teams this past season—Matt (Seahawks) and Tim (Giants) Hasselbeck; Josh (Cards) and Luke (Bucs) McCown; and Koy (Eagles) and Ty (Falcons) Detmer.

Yet the Mannings have taken the idea of an NFL family to new heights, in part because of their relationship, collegiate success, geography, and unusual circumstances.

Archie went from college to the second pick in the 1971 NFL Draft by the Saints. Peyton would star at Tennessee before becoming 1998's No. 1 pick by the Colts. Eli followed his father's footsteps to Ole Miss and became the second Manning chosen No. 1, eventually landing in New York via a draft-day trade with San Diego.

"I'm still amazed that we have two sons in the NFL," says Archie, who bought a condo in Oxford, Miss., so he could more easily attend Eli's college games. "I didn't push for that, and I never thought about the prospect that they might be facing each other."

But they will, perhaps many times. And while the two are physically similar and could be mistaken for each other even when not in a football uniform, they are unique.

"Peyton is intense, analytical, and a driven superstar who appreciates hard work," says Underwood, who spent considerable time with the family as a collaborator on the book.

"Eli is so laid-back that Archie told me he was driving to a big basketball game one night when Eli asked him, 'Who are we playing?' Peyton not only could tell you who they were playing, but who the coach was, the physical makeup of the team, and some statistics. It doesn't mean that Eli is any less competitive, they're just different."

But what has struck Underwood most about the Manning family—which includes oldest brother Cooper (whose athletic career was grounded in college by stenosis, a constricting and narrowing of the spinal cord)—is their sense of togetherness. It's a state of mind that begins with Archie's "order of four" credo ("first my faith, then my family, my education, and my athletics") and follows with constantly shared reminders of love, both verbally and spiritually. "They pull together," Underwood has observed, "and it's just a neat thing."

This togetherness is reflected at their annual football academy in Louisiana, which drew more than 1,000 campers last July, and in their Katrina relief efforts. And it reverberates socially. Last October, Peyton used his bye week to visit Eli in New York, dressed up in an Elvis costume for a Halloween dinner in Manhattan with his wife, and the next day watched the Giants-Redskins game at Giants Stadium, where he witnessed one of Eli's best performances of the season.

Courtesy of Al Pereira

Two-time Super Bowl MVP Bart Starr was among those working the phones at the NFL's Hurricane Relief telethon.

"It was really one of the more enjoyable nights I've had," Peyton told the Associated Press. "Nobody recognized me. Well, they recognized me, but they recognized me as Elvis."

Eli returned the favor the next week, traveling to Foxborough to watch Peyton throw three touchdown passes in a Monday night victory over the New England Patriots. The next time they see each other play, their teams may be on opposite sidelines. It's a proposition that has media-types and fans alike giddy with anticipation.

"I already have people calling me for tickets for that game next year," Archie says of the scheduled 2006 regular-season Colts-Giants matchup in New York, which will likely end up in prime time. "I can do without that game."

So can Peyton. "Stop making me think about that mess," he told ESPN inquisitors one Monday night, when asked about potential games against his younger brother. Yet, given Peyton's success, which includes an NFL-record 49 touchdown passes in 2004, and the rapid ascent of Eli, these meetings have the makings of instant classics. And multiply that hype by the Roman numeral of your choice if they should meet in the Super Bowl.

Ernie Accorsi, general manager of the Giants, calls the quarterback position "the most important job in sports," and he began studying Eli Manning in his junior year at Ole Miss, appreciating him as much in spirited losses against quality opponents as in routine victories.

"He is what he is because he's a Manning," says Accorsi, who has evaluated quarterbacks as far back as John Unitas. "But I didn't get caught up in the legacy."

Rather, Accorsi analyzed the givens—size, arm strength, mobility, intelligence—and then what he terms "that undefinable quality. You can't see it," he says, of what it takes for a quarterback to lead his team the length of the field in the last few minutes to victory, "but you have to feel it."

Even Archie—whose supporting cast was never strong enough to help him reach the Super Bowl—knows the formula for determining who will be a successful NFL quarterback is imprecise at best.

"There are different hats you wear and no set personality," he says. "And there are different ways to be a leader. Peyton and Eli are similar in a lot of physical ways, but also very different. Both worked hard to get where they are and take a lot of pride in what they do.

"They have a big respect for the game and for the quarterback position, not just because I played it, but because of all the Hall of Famers who played it. I don't want Eli to copy Peyton; they each have their own personal styles that have carried over to football."

More importantly to their father, both have the class and convictions that make them Mannings. ■

Neil Amdur is president of Amdur Productions. He has returned to writing after spending 12 years as sports editor of the New York Times.

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by Ron Wolf

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Hall of Famer. Leader.
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Reggie White was all of these things and so much more. He's certainly one of the finest players ever to play defensive end in the National Football League. He was a remarkable athlete who had tremendous ability. And what capped it all was that he was an even better person.

But while it may be a cliché to say that a player was great both on and off the field, White added yet another dimension to his legacy: He is considered by many to be the most important free agent in NFL history, and his role in helping restore a mythical franchise back to glory is part of what makes Reggie White a football immortal.

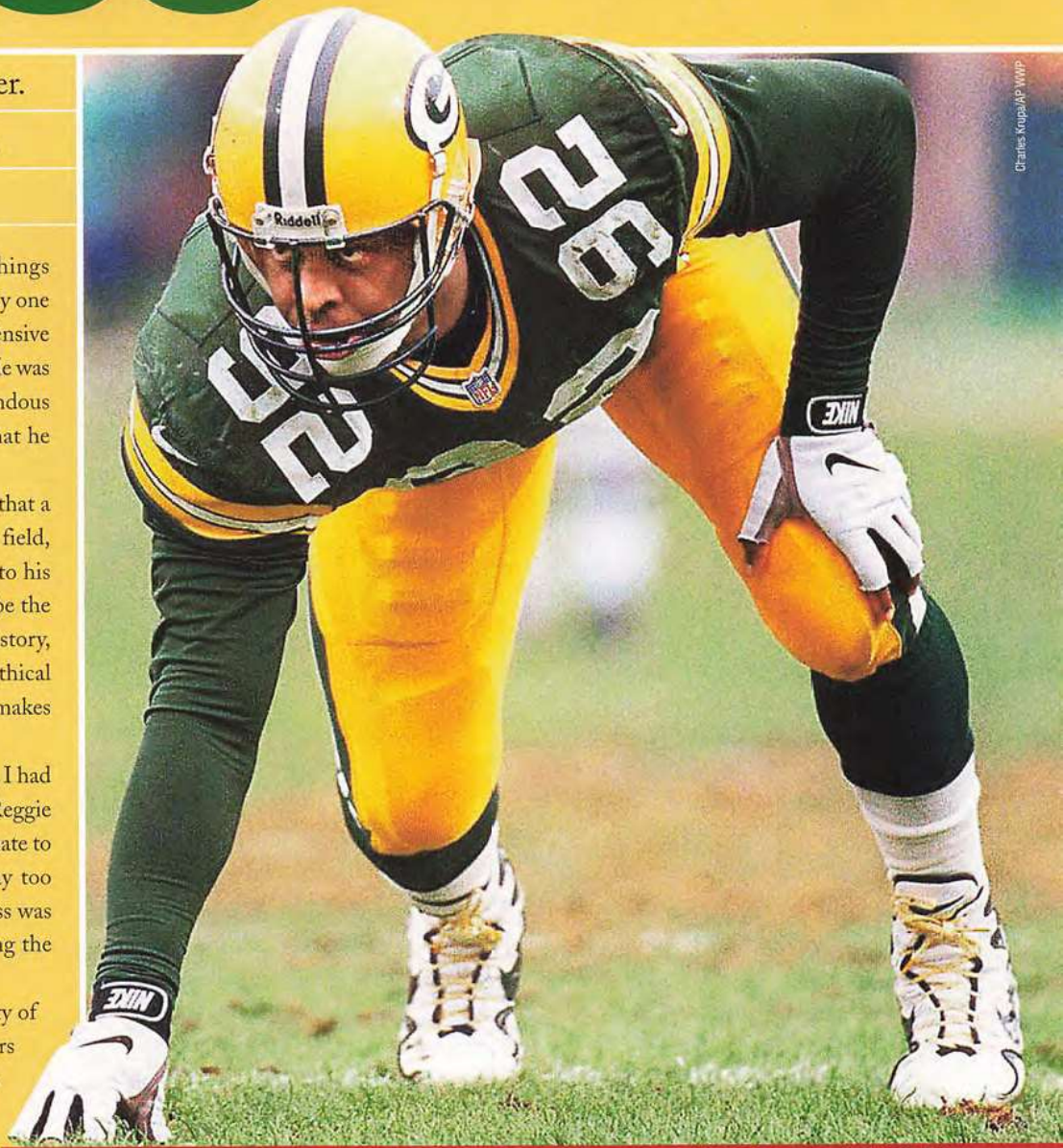
As general manager of the Packers, I had the great fortune to play a part in the Reggie White story, and I'm even more fortunate to have known the man. He left us way too soon. There's no telling what greatness was ahead for him, but there is no denying the football legacy he left behind.

An All-American at the University of Tennessee, he was one of those players you knew was destined for greatness the moment you saw him. Out of college, he played two years in the USFL before becoming a superstar with the Eagles. The NFL's 1987 Defensive Player of the Year and a relentless pass rusher who commanded special attention every time he stepped on the field, White became the most coveted player of the free agent era when he entered the market in 1993.

In my position with Green Bay—charged with rebuilding a once-proud franchise that had fallen on hard times—I knew White could be a cornerstone of that process. We had already acquired a young quarterback, Brett Favre, through a trade with Atlanta. Now we needed to address the defense.

But how could small-market Green Bay compete with the deep pockets of other teams? White was being wined and dined everywhere he went. The Falcons introduced him in front of the Georgia Legislature. I think the Cleveland Browns gave his wife a mink coat. The Jets sat him down with some of New York City's most influential leaders.

To me, the most important thing was to treat him as we would any other player visiting Green Bay. He was picked up in an



Charles Krupa/AP WWP

A member of Green Bay's Super Bowl XXXI champions, the late Reggie White now is eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

SUV, not a limo. We ate lunch at the Red Lobster.

In the long run, I think that benefited us. Green Bay is a fabulous community and that was a big selling point. White played the game of football with uncommon passion—the same way Green Bay residents follow their football team.

"You're already a great football player," I told him. "Come to Green Bay and you'll become a legend."

Mike Roemer/AP WWP

Shortly after his retirement, Reggie was honored by the Packers. He spent his final six seasons in Green Bay.

And that's exactly what happened. I believe that going to Green Bay and accomplishing what he did helped him become an icon. All of Wisconsin adopted him. In turn, Reggie and his family adopted the state.

Religion may be what most people associate with the player known as the "Minister of Defense," but Reggie's off-field legacy reached well beyond his role as an ordained minister and his strong religious beliefs.

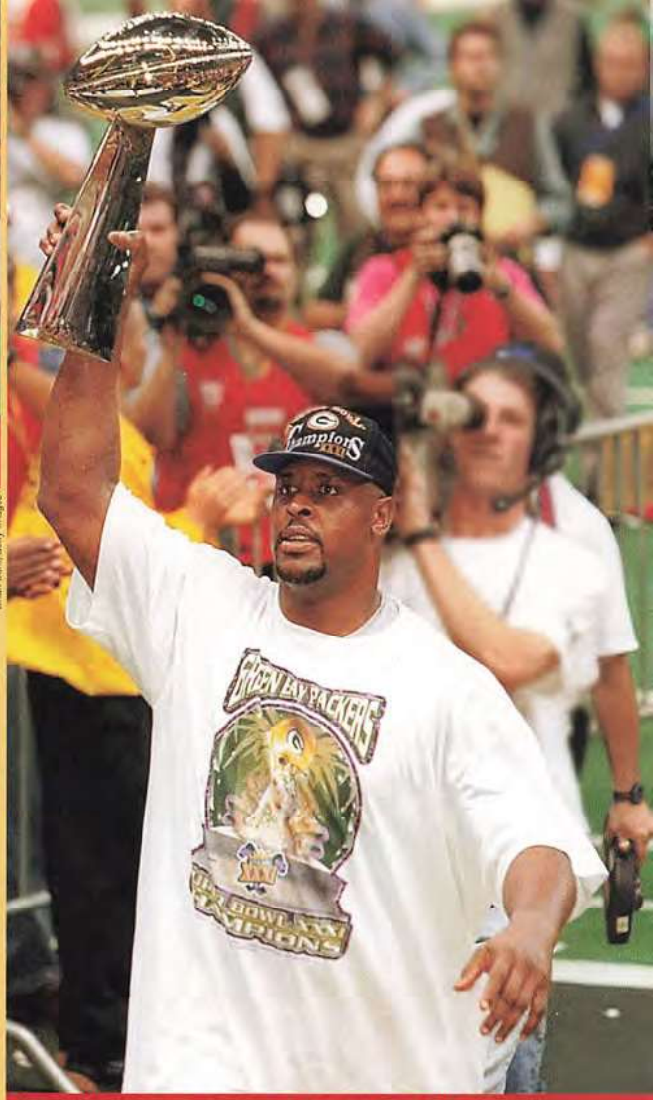
His biggest impact was the general affection he showed toward people—and not just in Green Bay. He also spent a lot of time in Milwaukee and was as big a personality as a professional football player can be in that community. I know that sounds silly when you're talking about a community of 100,000 people, but he was as big as it got.

Reggie was such a commanding presence off the field that it's possible those achievements will someday overshadow what he did on it. To some fans, that might already be the case. Obviously, his ability on the field gave him a platform to voice his opinion, to take advantage of his gifts away from football.

But it is important to remember that his football ability was just remarkable. He had a tremendous gift and he played accordingly.

There are some great players who have played defensive end in pro football, and maybe we're guilty of using the word "great" too often. But Reggie belongs in that category of defensive linemen, right there with Hall of Famers Gino Marchetti and Deacon Jones. Any and all superlatives you use to describe them also apply to Reggie White.

He had 124 sacks in his eight seasons with the Eagles, and another 68.5 in six years with the Packers. Over his career, that's an unbelievable average of 14 sacks per season. The 8.5 sacks he recorded in 1996 actually represented his third-lowest single-season total, but he more than made up for it with three sacks in our Super Bowl XXXI win over New England that gave us our first league title in nearly three decades.


Brian Bahr/Getty Images

Reggie takes a victory lap around the Superdome following Super Bowl XXXI. His three sacks set a Super Bowl record.

The image of Reggie running around the Superdome turf with the Lombardi Trophy held above his head is one of the lasting impressions I have of him. People were critical of Reggie for signing with Green Bay in the first place. The Packers weren't very good when he got there, and he was accused of taking the deal only because it offered the most money.

But then the Packers became Super Bowl champions, and I think you could see his feeling of vindication as he carried that trophy. To him, it was proof that he made the right decision. He accomplished the ultimate achievement in professional football.

Before Reggie White arrived in Green Bay, some fans may have forgotten that it is the Mecca of pro football. But I think that's what sold him, more than the money. He fit right in, and his contributions to the Packers' history only enhanced the team's legacy.

Simply put, Reggie was a difference-maker. In the entire scope of NFL free agency, there have been two truly fabulous players—Reggie White and Deion Sanders (who left the Falcons to sign with the 49ers and promptly helped them win Super Bowl XXIX). You'd be splitting hairs to choose which one was better since both were instrumental in the success of the teams they joined, and I don't think there have been any bigger or better free agents since then.

At the beginning of the 2003 season, the Packers held a ceremony to unveil the renovated Lambeau Field and brought back a number of the team's luminaries. Reggie spoke to me at length about his sincere interest in getting back into football in some way, shape, or form. He again expressed his love for the game, how much he missed it, and how important his time in Green Bay was. I found that really interesting.

He wasn't just a great football player with other passions. He was truly passionate about football.

I don't know what he might have done, but I'm sure he would have joined an NFL team in some front-office capacity, and I'm certain he would have been successful at anything he did in that area.

He would have done well simply because of who he was. His demeanor, and the kind of person he was, would have made failure an impossibility. ■

Ron Wolf served as Packers' GM from 1991-2001, during which time the team won two NFC titles and Super Bowl XXXI. Reggie White, a key part of that success, passed away suddenly on Dec. 26, 2004, at age 43. The Pro Football Hall of Fame announces its Class of 2006 on Super Bowl weekend.

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Comerica Park, Detroit

2006 "Great Things"
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2008 NCAA Midwest Regionals
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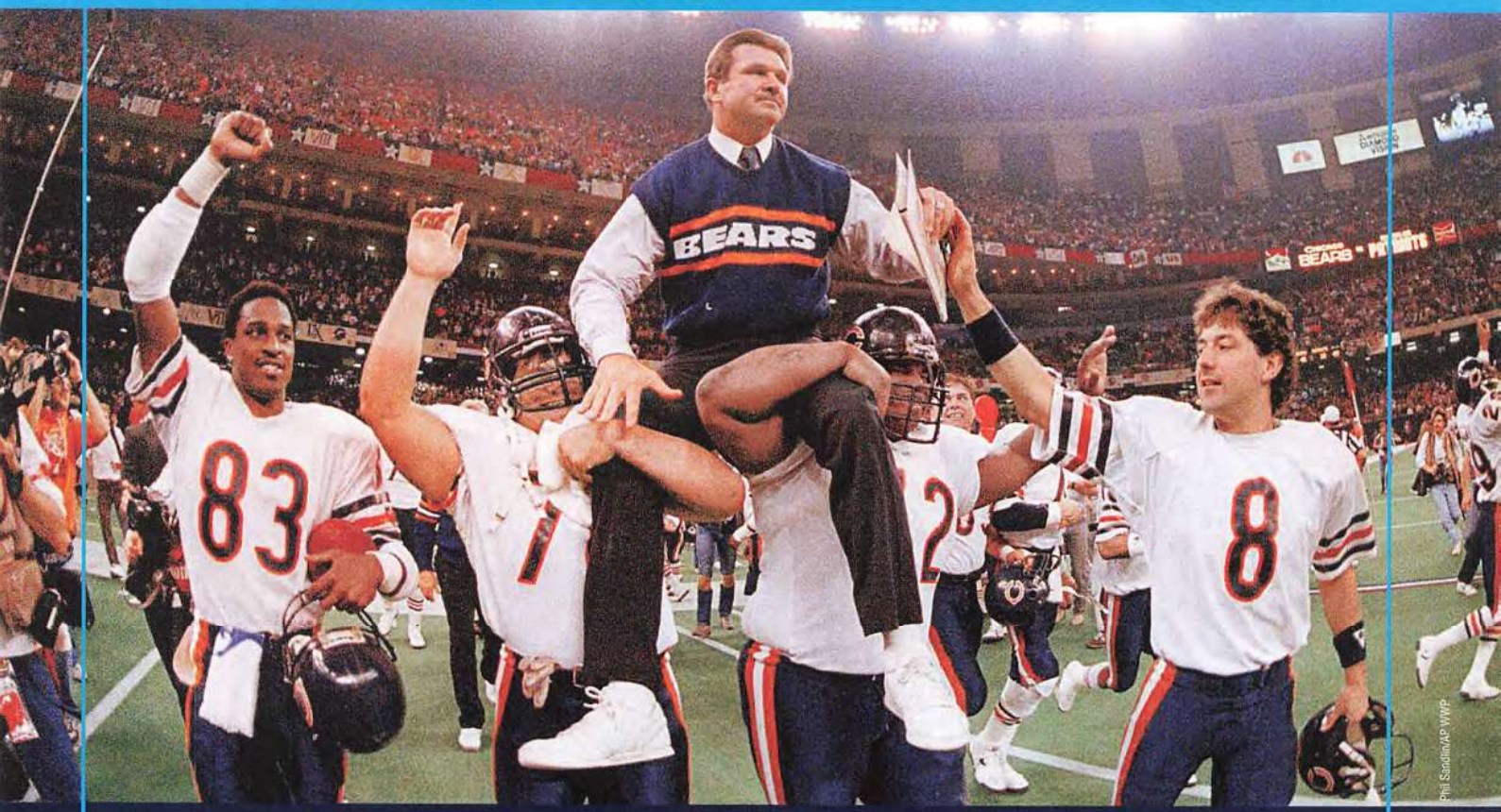
Da' Facts

18-1. Super Bowl champs. A hit record. Off-field antics. The 1985 Chicago Bears were dominant...and different.



Phil Sandlin/AP WWP

by Rick Telander

Say what you want about the undefeated 1972 Miami Dolphins, the early Green Bay Packers, the mid-70's Pittsburgh Steelers, or even the recent New England Patriots under Bill Belichick. The 1985 Super Bowl XX champion Chicago Bears were, for one season, the best and most entertaining football team ever.

I'm not here to argue. The Bears finished 18-1 that season, slipping up only against the Dan Marino-led Dolphins in the 13th week. If you think I'm nuts, take your grievances to the man on the barstool next to you. Just remember this fact: no NFL team has combined dominance on the field with entertainment off it the way the Mike Ditka-coached '85 Bears did.

Looking back on the mini-dynasty two decades later, Ditka says with amusement, "I didn't read the papers much, but I guess we really did put on a show."

And how.

Does a 300-and-something-pound goliath lining up in the offensive backfield and crushing linebackers strike you as amusement? That year William "The Refrigerator" Perry, a well-marbled, rookie defensive tackle from Clemson, not only blocked from the fullback position, he ran for two touchdowns (one in the Super Bowl) and caught a TD pass.

"I wanted to make him the biggest guy ever to throw a touchdown pass, too," says Ditka with a smile. "But he got sacked."

Then there was devious, brilliant, fragile, rebellious quarterback Jim McMahon, who actually pulled his pants down and mooned a TV helicopter during a Super Bowl practice in New Orleans. There was defensive tackle Steve "Mongo" McMichael, who would become a pro wrestler adept at smacking opponents with metal briefcases; linebacker Otis Wilson, who barked like a dog after big hits; and safety Gary Fencik, a headhunting Yale grad who would get his MBA from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Business. There were future Hall of Famers such as Mike Singletary, Dan Hampton, and the legendary Walter Payton, who was not only one of the game's greatest running backs, but also the team's undisputed leader in firecracker ignitions and prank phone calling.

This was the quick vortex of the era of sports figures as rascals and pitchmen, a less-restrictive time that would soon be replaced by a societal crackdown on such things as off-field partying and "unique" behavior of the wilder type.

Their mission began during the NFC Championship Game one season earlier. The Bears—who finished 10-6 and won their first NFC Central title—were humiliated by the 49ers.

"I didn't see any reason why the guys couldn't be themselves," defends Ditka, a Hall of Fame tight end who had a bit of fun himself during his career and who won a Super Bowl as a member of the Dallas Cowboys. "As long as they were dedicated to one thing—winning it all."

And they were.

Their mission began during the NFC Championship Game one season earlier. The Bears—who finished 10-6 and won their first NFC Central title—were humiliated by Bill Walsh's San Francisco 49ers, 23-0. It made no difference that the 49ers would ride their new-fangled West Coast offense to victory in Super Bowl XIX. Not only did quarterback Joe Montana trash the Bears' vaunted 46 defense by throwing quick passes to Dwight Clark and Freddie Solomon, tactician Walsh used 280-pound guard Guy McIntyre as a blocker in the backfield.

"I was mad because I had played too conservatively on offense," says Ditka. "I thought our defense could win it. Plus, I wasn't thrilled about seeing McIntyre back there."

In other words, Ditka was a volcano ready to erupt. And he used that fury to rally the troops in training camp the following summer in the cornfield kingdom of Platteville, Wisconsin.

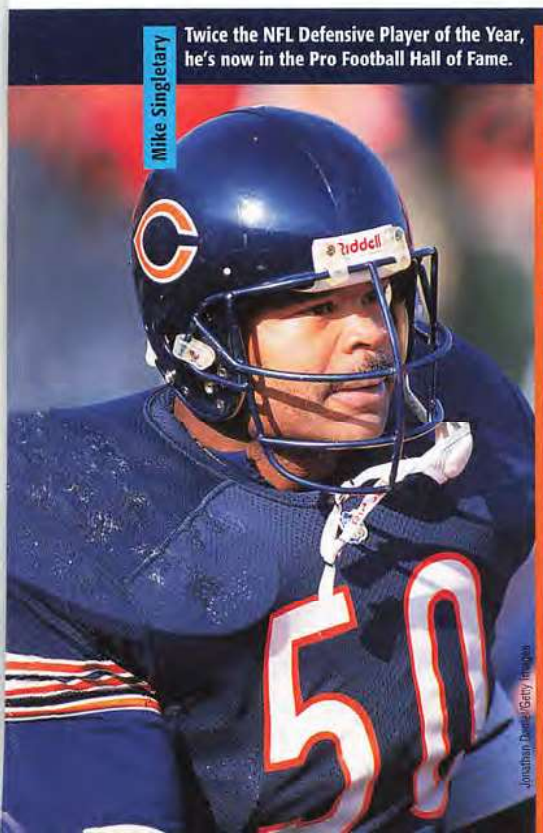
"It was in Platteville that we really came together," recalls offensive tackle Jim Covert. "We were far away from everything, and guys went out together, offense and defense."

If there was friction, it was between the two main coaches, Ditka and defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan. Ditka handled the offense, creating a ball-control system to complement the defense's ferocious attack. But Ryan, who felt he should have been named head coach by owner "Papa Bear" George Halas, sometimes had his boys so fired up that they beat the living daylights out of Ditka's offense, and what started out as practices became near civil wars.

"I'd be so mad, I'd say, 'Buddy, I don't see the Bears on our schedule. Do you?'" recalls Ditka. "'We don't play ourselves!' Sometimes we couldn't get anything accomplished, could barely run a play. There'd be fights and it was just really intense."

But when the season started, that pent-up rage was unified and turned toward the teams that stood in the way of success. The Bears won their opener against the Buccaneers, 38-28, and surprisingly it was the offense that came to the rescue. Down 28-17 at the half, the Bears ignited behind Payton, who carried the ball 17 times for 120 yards, and McMahon, whose 274 yards passing for two touchdowns earned him NFC Player of the Week honors.

Eleven days later in a rare Thursday night game at Minnesota, the


Mike Singletary
Twice the NFL Defensive Player of the Year, he's now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.
Riddell
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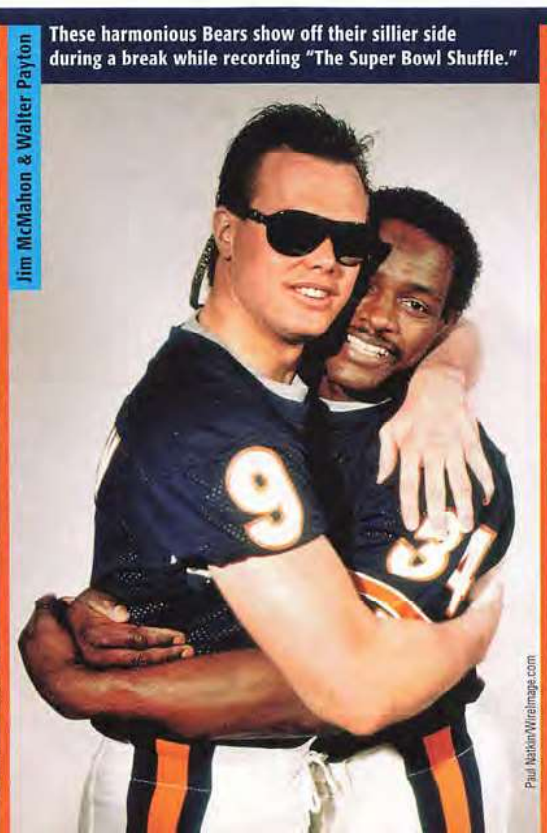
Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images


Jim McMahon & Walter Payton
These harmonious Bears show off their sillier side during a break while recording "The Super Bowl Shuffle."
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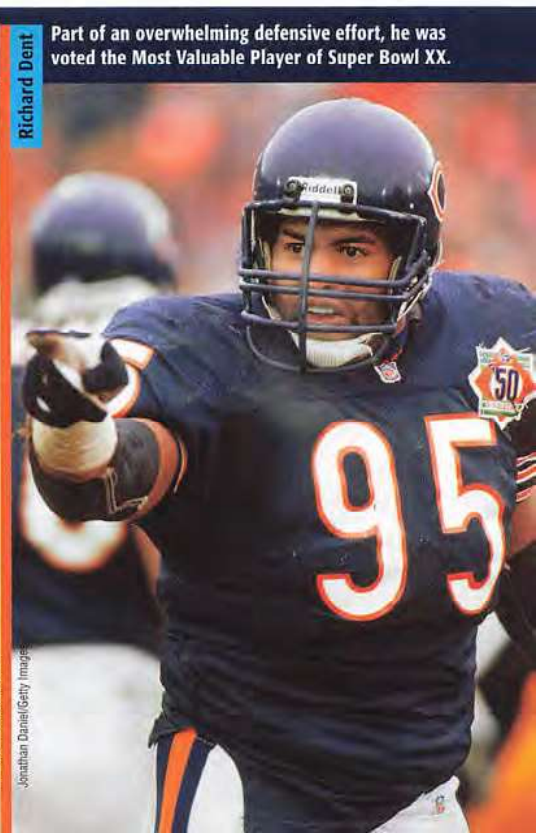
Paul Natkin/Wireimage.com


Richard Dent
Part of an overwhelming defensive effort, he was voted the Most Valuable Player of Super Bowl XX.
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Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

injured McMahon came off the bench in the second half and sparked a crazy comeback win over the Vikings.

When the "Punky QB" trotted in despite his injured throwing shoulder, the Bears were down, 17-9. McMahon's first play, an audible to a pass, went for a 70-yard touchdown to wideout Willie Gault. His second play from scrimmage was a 25-yard scoring toss to wideout Dennis McKinnon. A few plays after that he threw another touchdown pass to McKinnon, this one a 43-yarder. The Bears won, 33-24, and Payton said in the post-game locker room, "It was like everybody came in at halftime and got out their rosary beads."

Ditka hadn't wanted to play McMahon at all, but the quarterback had bugged him so much on the sideline that Ditka sent him in for the struggling Steve Fuller mostly to shut McMahon up.

"Jim was driving me crazy, like a dog on my ankle. 'Put me in. Put me in.' I knew he couldn't throw, he hadn't practiced all week, but I finally couldn't take it anymore. What he did was insane."

The 46 defense, with its eight men on the line and rushers like Dan Hampton and Richard Dent twitching with wide-eyed glee, terrified foes the way a pack of starved Dobermans might.

The Bears and McMahon were officially on the map. Much of the nation had seen this heroic display. And Ditka was thinking about victories large and small.

"I liked the fact that our offense had bailed out our great defense in two of our first three games," he says. "That made me feel good. I guess part of it was my competition with Buddy, my desire to make him know our side of the ball was as valuable as his."

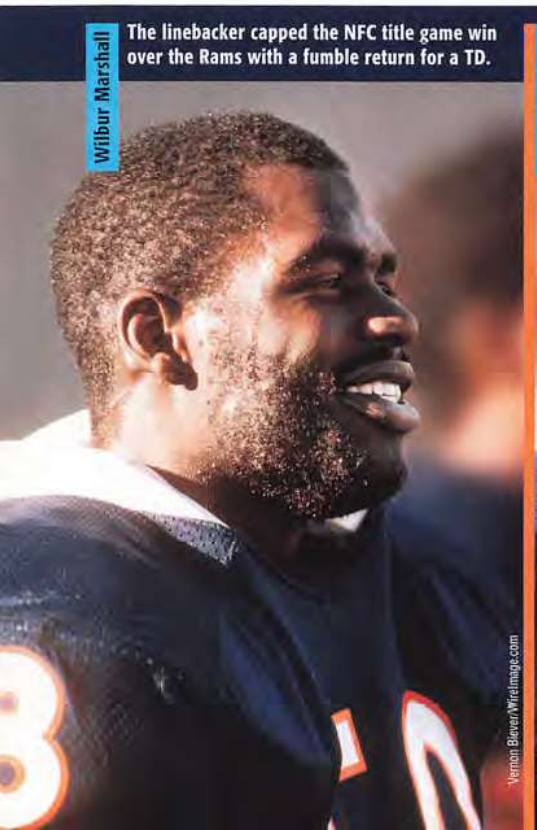
September ended with the Bears owning a 4-0 mark. October arrived and the Chicago juggernaut rolled on even more defiantly, giving up only 19, 10, 7, and 9 points in the next four wins, while scoring an average of 26. In that stretch came the famous Bears-Packers game in which Ditka inserted the mammoth Perry at fullback—thank you Bill Walsh—and the rookie behemoth (no one knew for sure if he weighed 315 or 350) twice enveloped poor Packers linebacker George Cumby, who weighed at least 90 pounds less.

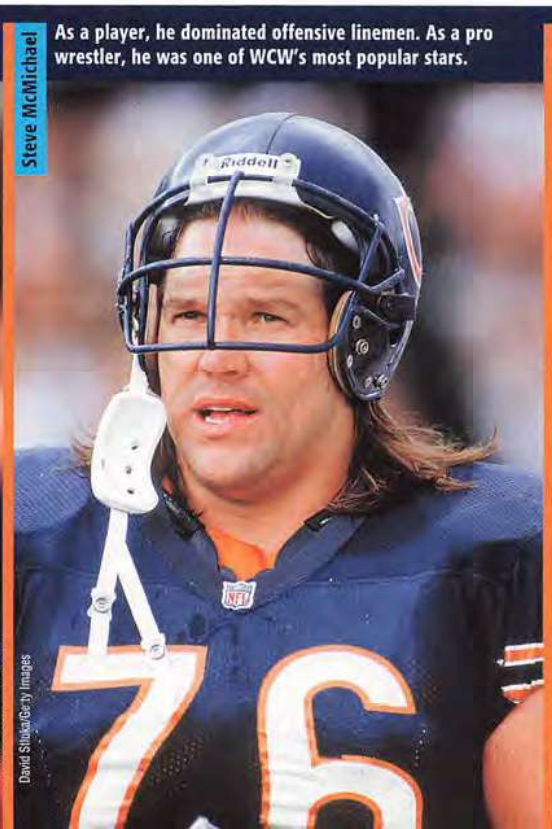
After that Perry, with his gap-toothed smile, became a media darling who, in short order, would endorse everything from bacon to automobiles to paper towels to long underwear. Later, on the *David Letterman Show*, Fridge would be asked if it was true he had once consumed two cases of beer after a Clemson-North Carolina game. Fridge nodded, "It was a big game."

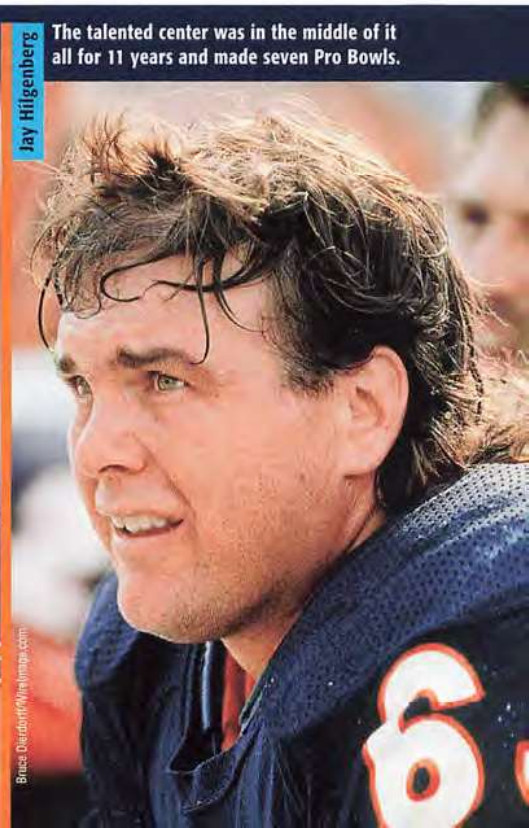
November found the Bears in full and furious assault mode. The 46 defense, with its eight men on the line and rushers like Hampton and Richard Dent twitching with wide-eyed glee, terrified foes the way a pack of starved Dobermans might. For the month, the Bears beat the Packers, Lions, Cowboys, and Falcons by the combined score of 120-13. Down in Irving, Texas, Ditka's renegades hammered the Cowboys, 44-0, the worst loss ever for the home team. Coach Tom Landry had been a gracious mentor when Ditka was a Dallas player and later an assistant coach, but the whipping was simply part of the journey.

"I loved Tom," says Ditka. "It was a huge game for us, but part of me felt sad at what we had done."

For such a successful team, the year had its share of ugly moments. Case in point would be the hugely-anticipated Monday Night game against the Dolphins at the Orange Bowl on December 2 (with the 12-0 Bears venturing toward perfection) when things deteriorated to near chaos. To this day, the game is the highest-rated Monday Night venture ever. But there were no cameras to record the near fist-fight Ditka and


Wilbur Marshall
The linebacker capped the NFC title game win over the Rams with a fumble return for a TD.
Vernon Biever/WireImage.com


Steve McMichael
As a player, he dominated offensive linemen. As a pro wrestler, he was one of WCW's most popular stars.
David Stluka/Getty Images


Jay Hilgenberg
The talented center was in the middle of it all for 11 years and made seven Pro Bowls.
Bruce Dierdorff/WireImage.com

Ryan engaged in at halftime, with the Bears down, 31-7, and Ditka enraged over Ryan's seeming unwillingness to adapt to Marino's lightning release and coach Don Shula's roll-out game plan.

"Players separated us pretty quickly," says Ditka. "I apologized to Buddy later. But I'll maintain to this day that we lost that game because the defense didn't change. If the tanks are getting blown up, come in with the Air Force. That's all I was saying."

The Bears lost, 38-24, and their chance at perfection was gone, but it didn't stop a thing. Just the opposite happened; the setback seemed to re-energize them. The very next day the players recorded a rap-dance video called, "The Super Bowl Shuffle." The tune featured, among other remarkable displays, the Fridge rhyming "rookie" and "no dumb cookie." It rose to No. 41 on the Billboard charts and became one of the biggest-selling music videos ever. And, remember, this was three games before the regular season ended!

The Bears destroyed the AFC champions in the worst rout in the Super Bowl's 20-year history. Their defense was so overwhelming that at halftime New England had minus 14 yards of offense.

"Willie Gault asked me to be in it," recalls Ditka. "And I can dance a bit, but the nuns told me back in grammar school that I don't sing, I howl. So I declined."

The Bears finished the regular season 15-1 and had nine players voted to the Pro Bowl. They had the league's highest-scoring offense (456 points) and allowed fewer than 12.5 points per game. Payton rushed for 1,551 yards—the ninth of his ten 1,000-yard seasons.

January would be the Bears' finest month of all. Everything they had worked to become was on display—the teamwork, the blending of offense and defense, the arrogance.

They shut out the Giants and the Rams in the NFC playoffs by the combined score of 45-0. After the Rams' rout, Payton said of wild leader McMahon, "He was a crazy nut out there. He did everything but take his clothes off, and if we'd been out there longer, he might have done that."

No, the butt-baring wouldn't come until just before the Super Bowl. And the victim Patriots would have done well to heed the crude message and head back to Massachusetts.

The Bears destroyed the AFC champions, 46-10, in the worst Super Bowl rout in the game's 20-year history. Their defense was so overwhelming that at halftime New England had minus 14 yards of offense. Starting Patriots quarterback Tony Eason played almost three quarters and did not complete a pass. After fumbling on the opening series and yielding no yards but a field goal, the Bears scored the game's next 44 points.

"A [butt] whipping, pure and simple," says Ditka, who was carried off the field by his players, as was his rival (and co-general) Ryan.

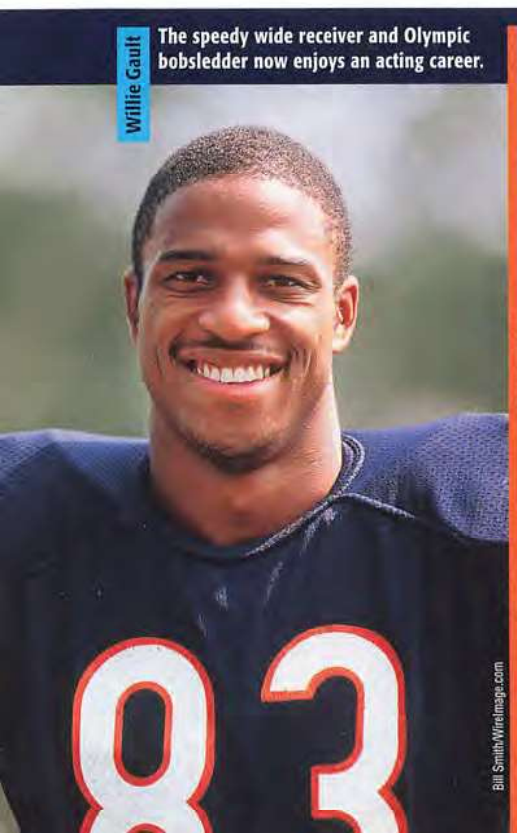
The Bears won four of the next five NFC Central division titles and advanced to the conference championship game following the 1988 season, but for a variety of reasons—almost none of which had to do with talent or desire—they never returned to the Super Bowl.

"I thought somebody had just invented this giant merry-go-round, and we were going to ride forever," says Ditka wistfully.

But for that one moment, for that one revolution on the raucous, joyous carnival contraption, the Bears were the best ever.

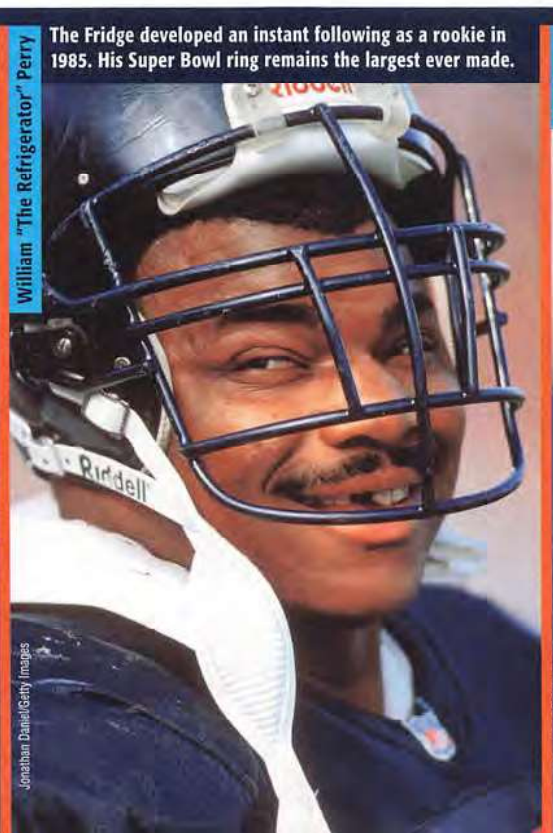
Don't even argue. ■

Rick Telander, a former senior writer for Sports Illustrated *and* ESPN, The Magazine, *is the lead sports columnist for the* Chicago Sun-Times *and the author of eight books, including the classic,* Heaven Is a Playground. *His new book, written with Mike Ditka, is entitled,* In Life, First You Kick Ass: Reflections on the 1985 Bears and Wisdom from Da Coach.



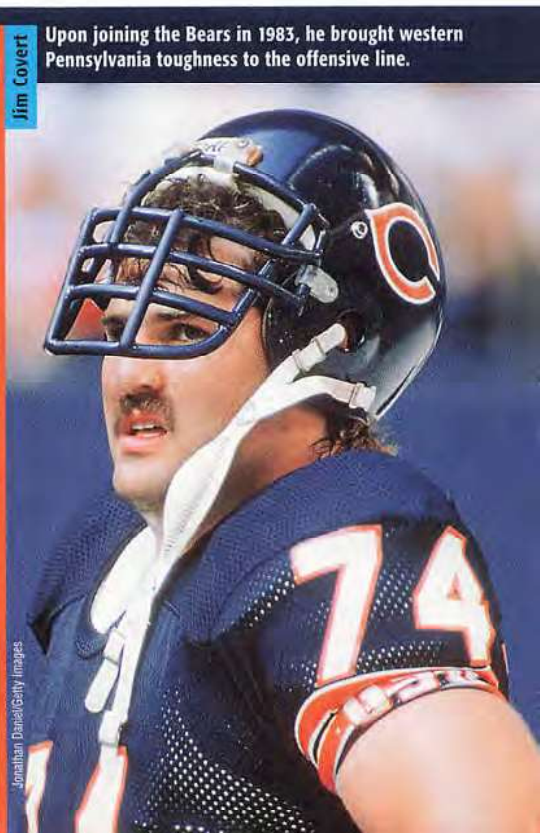
Willie Gault — The speedy wide receiver and Olympic bobsledder now enjoys an acting career.

Bill Smith/WireImage.com



William "The Refrigerator" Perry — The Fridge developed an instant following as a rookie in 1985. His Super Bowl ring remains the largest ever made.

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images



Jim Covert — Upon joining the Bears in 1983, he brought western Pennsylvania toughness to the offensive line.

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

The Championship Collection

Featuring Super Bowls I-XXXIX

First World Championship Game AFL vs NFL

Green Bay 35, Kansas City 10
January 15, 1967
Memorial Coliseum (Los Angeles, CA)
MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Green Bay

- Starr completed 16 of 23 passes for 250 yards, including two touchdowns.
- Max McGee caught seven of Starr's passes for 138 yards and two TDs.
- Green Bay led, 14-10, at the half before scoring three second-half TDs.
- The Packers received $15,000 per player; each member of the Chiefs collected $7,500.

SUPER BOWL II

Green Bay 33, Oakland 14
January 14, 1968
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Green Bay

- Starr was again MVP, after going 13 of 24 for 202 yards and a TD.
- Green Bay's Don Chandler kicked four field goals.
- The Packers' Herb Adderley scored the Super Bowl's first defensive TD on a 60-yard interception return.
- The game was the last for Vince Lombardi as Green Bay's coach.

SUPER BOWL III

N.Y. Jets 16, Baltimore 7
January 12, 1969
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Joe Namath (QB), New York

- Namath, who "guaranteed" a win on the Thursday before the game, went 17 of 28 for 206 passing yards.
- The Jets' Matt Snell rushed for 121 yards and scored on a 4-yard run.
- The Jets intercepted Colts QB Earl Morrall three times in the first half.
- New York's win was the first by the AFL in the Super Bowl.

SUPER BOWL IV

Kansas City 23, Minnesota 7
January 11, 1970
Tulane Stadium (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Len Dawson (QB), Kansas City

- Dawson completed 12 of 17 passes and threw a 46-yard touchdown to Otis Taylor for the Chiefs' final score.
- Jan Stenerud's three FGs put the Chiefs' first nine points on the board.
- Kansas City forced five turnovers and held the Vikings to 67 yards rushing.
- Super Bowl IV marked the final game before the AFL-NFL merger.

SUPER BOWL V

Baltimore 16, Dallas 13
January 17, 1971
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Chuck Howley (LB), Dallas

- Howley (two interceptions) became the first defender and only player from a losing team chosen MVP.
- Rookie Jim O'Brien's 32-yard field goal with five seconds to go broke a 13-13 tie; his winning kick was set up by a Mike Curtis interception.
- This was the first Super Bowl played on artificial turf.

SUPER BOWL VI

Dallas 24, Miami 3
January 16, 1972
Tulane Stadium (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Roger Staubach (QB), Dallas

- Staubach completed 12 of 19 passes for 119 yards and two touchdowns.
- Dallas' Duane Thomas rushed for 95 yards, including a 3-yard TD run, and Walt Garrison gained 74.
- Chuck Howley's fumble recovery and interception led to 10 Dallas points.
- The Cowboys allowed just 185 total yards and didn't give up a TD.

SUPER BOWL VII

Miami 14, Washington 7
January 14, 1973
Memorial Coliseum (Los Angeles, CA)
MVP: Jake Scott (S), Miami

- Scott intercepted a pair of passes, including one in the end zone.
- Miami scored all its points in the first half—on Bob Griese's 28-yard pass to Howard Twilley and Jim Kiick's 1-yard run.
- Including playoffs, the Dolphins went 17-0, accomplishing the only perfect season in NFL history.

JIM KIICK
The Miami running back scored touchdowns in both Super Bowl VII and Super Bowl VIII and was part of the Dolphins' undefeated 1972 team.

Winning the Super Bowl certainly has a nice ring to it.

I II III IV V VI VII

SUPER BOWL VIII

Miami 24, Minnesota 7
January 13, 1974
Rice Stadium (Houston, TX)
MVP: Larry Csonka (RB), Miami

- Csonka rushed for 145 yards and opened the scoring with a 5-yard run. He later added a second touchdown.
- Jim Kiick scored on a 1-yard run and Garo Yepremian kicked a 28-yard field goal to make it 17-0 at halftime.
- Bob Griese threw only seven passes.
- The Dolphins became the first team to reach three straight Super Bowls.

SUPER BOWL IX

Pittsburgh 16, Minnesota 6
January 12, 1975
Tulane Stadium (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Franco Harris (RB), Pittsburgh

- Harris rushed for 158 yards and scored on a 9-yard touchdown run.
- Terry Bradshaw threw a 4-yard TD pass to Larry Brown to clinch the win.
- Pittsburgh's defense yielded just 119 yards, including 17 rushing yards.
- Dwight White's second-quarter sack of Fran Tarkenton provided the Super Bowl with its first safety.

SUPER BOWL X

Pittsburgh 21, Dallas 17
January 18, 1976
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Lynn Swann (WR), Pittsburgh

- Swann caught four passes for 161 yards, including a 64-yard TD.
- Terry Bradshaw threw for 209 yards and two touchdowns in the win.
- The Steelers' Roy Gerela added two fourth-quarter field goals and Reggie Harrison blocked a punt for a safety.
- Glen Edwards' end zone interception on the final play preserved the win.

SUPER BOWL XI

Oakland 32, Minnesota 14
January 9, 1977
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Fred Biletnikoff (WR), Oakland

- Biletnikoff made four key catches and finished with 79 receiving yards.
- The Raiders' Clarence Davis rushed for 137 yards and Pete Banaszak scored twice on short runs.
- Oakland scored on three straight possessions to lead, 16-0, at halftime.
- Willie Brown's 75-yard interception return for a TD sealed the win.

SUPER BOWL XII

Dallas 27, Denver 10
January 15, 1978
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVPs: Randy White (DT) and Harvey Martin (DE), Dallas

- White and Martin were part of a defensive effort that recovered four fumbles and intercepted four passes.
- Butch Johnson's diving 47-yard TD catch put the Cowboys ahead, 20-3.
- Dallas' Robert Newhouse closed out the scoring with his 29-yard touchdown pass to Golden Richards.

SUPER BOWL XIII

Pittsburgh 35, Dallas 31
January 21, 1979
Orange Bowl (Miami, FL)
MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Pittsburgh

- Bradshaw completed 17 of 30 passes for 318 yards and four touchdowns.
- John Stallworth caught two first-half TDs, helping the Steelers lead, 21-14.
- Rocky Bleier had a TD and recovered an onside kick to clinch the win after Dallas had cut into a 35-17 deficit.
- Pittsburgh became the first team to capture three Super Bowl titles.

SUPER BOWL XIV

Pittsburgh 31, LA Rams 19
January 20, 1980
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Pittsburgh

- Bradshaw completed 14 of 21 passes for 309 yards, including a go-ahead 73-yard TD to John Stallworth.
- Lynn Swann had a 47-yard TD catch.
- Pittsburgh had trailed, 13-10, at halftime, and was behind, 19-17, entering the final quarter.
- The crowd of 103,985 made it the best-attended Super Bowl in history.

SUPER BOWL XV

Oakland 27, Philadelphia 10
January 25, 1981
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Jim Plunkett (QB), Oakland

- Plunkett (13 of 21, 261 yards) had three touchdown passes, including an 80-yard throw to Kenny King that made it 14-0 late in the first quarter.
- Rod Martin's three interceptions set a Super Bowl record, and Mark van Eeghen rushed for 75 yards.
- The Raiders became the first Wild Card team to win the Super Bowl.

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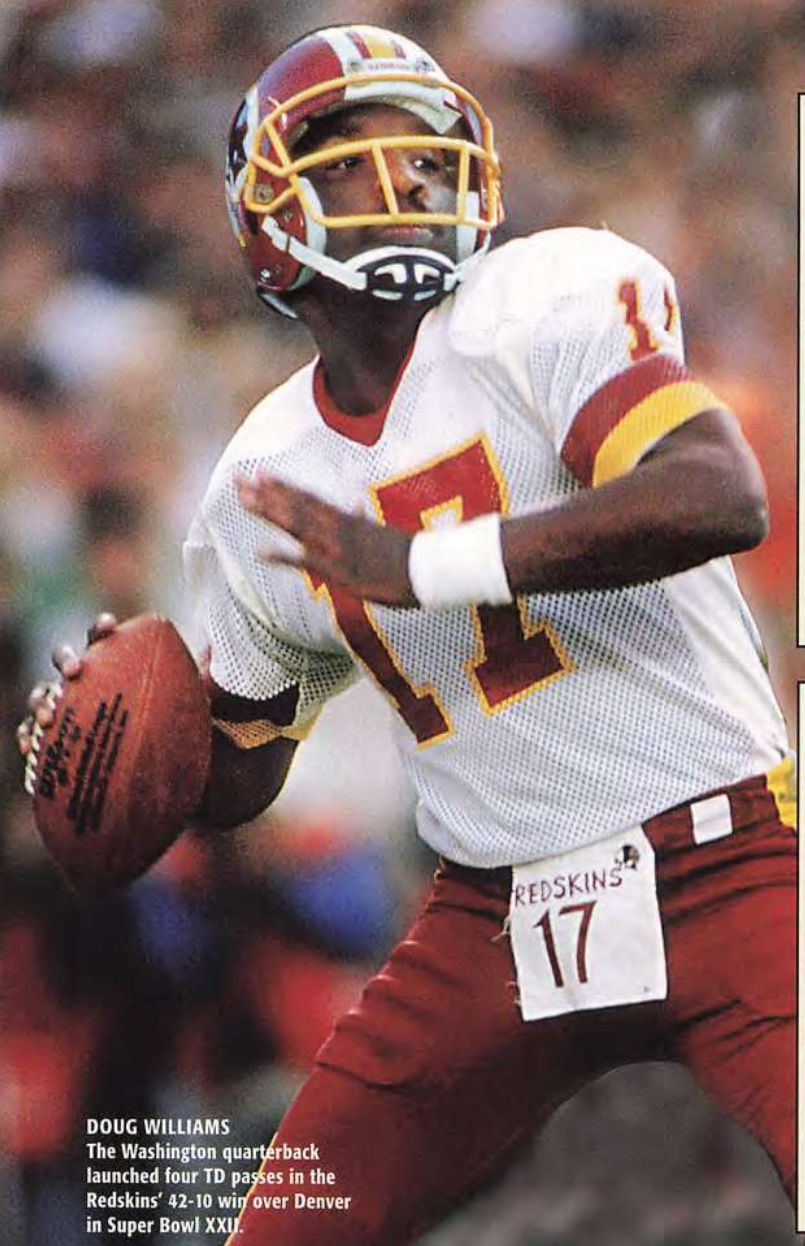

DOUG WILLIAMS
The Washington quarterback launched four TD passes in the Redskins' 42-10 win over Denver in Super Bowl XXII.

SUPER BOWL XVI

San Francisco 26, Cincinnati 21
January 24, 1982
Silverdome (Pontiac, MI)
MVP: Joe Montana (QB), San Francisco

- Montana (14 of 22, 157 yards) threw an 11-yard TD pass to Earl Cooper and ran for a 1-yard score.
- Ray Wersching kicked four field goals, two in the fourth quarter after Cincinnati pulled within 20-14.
- The Bengals became the first team to outgain their opponent (356 to 275 yards) and lose the Super Bowl.

SUPER BOWL XVII

Washington 27, Miami 17
January 30, 1983
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: John Riggins (RB), Washington

- Riggins rushed for 166 yards; his 43-yard TD run early in the fourth quarter put the Redskins ahead.
- Washington's Joe Theismann (15 of 23, 143 yards) threw TD passes to Alvin Garrett and Charlie Brown.
- Miami was held to 176 total yards.
- Washington captured its first NFL title since 1942.

SUPER BOWL XVIII

L.A. Raiders 38, Washington 9
January 22, 1984
Tampa Stadium (Tampa, FL)
MVP: Marcus Allen (RB), Los Angeles

- Allen rushed for 191 yards and scored on TD runs of 5 and 74 yards.
- Oakland's Derrick Jensen recovered a blocked punt for the game's first score and Jack Squirek had a 5-yard interception return for a touchdown.
- Jim Plunkett completed 16 of 25 passes for 172 yards and one TD, a 12-yard throw to Cliff Branch.

SUPER BOWL XIX

San Francisco 38, Miami 16
January 20, 1985
Stanford Stadium (Stanford, CA)
MVP: Joe Montana (QB), San Francisco

- Montana threw for 331 yards and three touchdowns; he also rushed for 59 yards, including a 6-yard TD.
- Roger Craig became first player to score three TDs in a Super Bowl.
- Miami led, 10-7, before San Francisco took control, 28-16, at the half.
- The 49ers gained 537 total yards and led time of possession, 37:11 to 22:49.

SUPER BOWL XX

Chicago 46, New England 10
January 26, 1986
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Richard Dent (DE), Chicago

- Dent had 1.5 sacks and helped limit New England to 123 total yards.
- Jim McMahon became the first Super Bowl QB to rush for two touchdowns.
- Walter Payton rushed for 61 yards.
- Chicago posted seven sacks.
- The Bears captured their first NFL title since 1963.

SUPER BOWL XXI

N.Y. Giants 39, Denver 20
January 25, 1987
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Phil Simms (QB), New York

- Simms completed 22 of 25 passes for 268 yards and three touchdowns.
- The Giants trailed, 10-9, before scoring 30 points in the second half.
- Mark Bavaro's 13-yard TD catch gave the Giants the lead for good.
- Joe Morris rushed for 67 yards.
- N.Y. won its first NFL title since 1956.

SUPER BOWL XXII

Washington 42, Denver 10
January 31, 1988
Jack Murphy Stadium (San Diego, CA)
MVP: Doug Williams (QB), Washington

- Williams (18 of 29, 340 yards, 4 TDs) became the first African-American QB to play in an NFL title game.
- Trailing 10-0, Washington erupted for 35 points in a span of 5:47 of the second quarter to take control.
- Ricky Sanders caught 80-yard and 50-yard touchdown passes.
- Timmy Smith rushed for 204 yards.

SUPER BOWL XXIII

San Francisco 20, Cincinnati 16
January 22, 1989
Joe Robbie Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: Jerry Rice (WR), San Francisco

- Rice caught 11 passes for 215 yards, including a 14-yard touchdown.
- Joe Montana's 10-yard TD pass to John Taylor with 34 seconds to play lifted the 49ers to victory.
- The Bengals had gone ahead, 16-13, on Jim Breech's 40-yard field goal.
- Montana finished with 357 passing yards and two touchdowns.

George Long/Wirelmage.com

XVI XVII XVIII XIX XX XXI XXII XXIII

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San Francisco 55, Denver 10

January 28, 1990
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Joe Montana (QB), San Francisco

- Montana became the Super Bowl's first three-time MVP after completing 22 of 29 passes for 297 yards and five touchdowns.
- Jerry Rice caught seven passes for 148 yards and three TDs.
- San Francisco held Denver to 12 first downs and 167 total yards, while its 55 points set a Super Bowl record.

N.Y. Giants 20, Buffalo 19

January 27, 1991
Tampa Stadium (Tampa, FL)
MVP: Ottis Anderson (RB), New York

- Anderson rushed 21 times for 102 yards and one touchdown.
- Thurman Thomas' 31-yard TD run gave Buffalo a 19-17 lead before Matt Bahr's 21-yard field goal put the Giants ahead for good.
- Jeff Hostetler (20 of 32, 222 yards) helped New York set a Super Bowl mark for time of possession (40:33).

OTTIS ANDERSON
He was the MVP of the Giants' Super Bowl XXV win over Buffalo, thought by some to be the best Super Bowl.

Washington 37, Buffalo 24

January 26, 1992
Metrodome (Minneapolis, MN)
MVP: Mark Rypien (QB), Washington

- Rypien completed 18 of 33 passes for 292 yards with two touchdowns.
- Washington built a 24-0 lead when Gerald Riggs scored his second TD of the game on a 2-yard run.
- Buffalo pulled within 24-10 before Gary Clark's 30-yard TD reception and two Chip Lohmiller field goals.
- The Redskins intercepted four passes.

Dallas 52, Buffalo 17

January 31, 1993
Rose Bowl (Pasadena, CA)
MVP: Troy Aikman (QB), Dallas

- Aikman completed 22 of 30 passes for 273 yards and four touchdowns.
- Dallas' defense forced nine turnovers.
- The Cowboys led, 28-10, at the half after Michael Irvin caught 19-yard and 18-yard TDs 18 seconds apart.
- Buffalo pulled within 31-17 before Dallas scored three touchdowns in a 2:33 span of the fourth quarter.

Dallas 30, Buffalo 13

January 30, 1994
Georgia Dome (Atlanta, GA)
MVP: Emmitt Smith (RB), Dallas

- Smith rushed for 132 yards and scored two second-half touchdowns.
- Buffalo led, 13-6, at the half on Thurman Thomas' TD run and a pair of Steve Christie field goals.
- James Washington's 46-yard fumble return for a TD tied the game.
- Dallas became first team to start 0-2 and go on to win the Super Bowl.

San Francisco 49, San Diego 26

January 29, 1995
Joe Robbie Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: Steve Young (QB), San Francisco

- Young passed for 325 yards and threw a Super Bowl-record six TDs.
- Both Ricky Watters and Jerry Rice scored three times in the win. Rice finished the game with 10 catches.
- The teams combined for 75 points, setting a Super Bowl record.
- San Francisco became the first team to win five Super Bowl titles.

Dallas 27, Pittsburgh 17

January 28, 1996
Sun Devil Stadium (Tempe, AZ)
MVP: Larry Brown (CB), Dallas

- Brown had two interceptions leading to 14 Cowboys points.
- Dallas, making its record eighth Super Bowl appearance, scored on its first three possessions to lead 13-0.
- After Brown's second pickoff, Emmitt Smith's 4-yard TD run made it 27-17.
- Troy Aikman completed 15 of 23 passes for 209 yards.

Green Bay 35, New England 21

January 26, 1997
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Desmond Howard (KR-PR), G.B.

- Howard had a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and finished with 244 total return yards.
- The Patriots pulled within 27-21 on Curtis Martin's 18-yard touchdown run before Howard's return.
- Reggie White set a Super Bowl record with three sacks and Green Bay's defense had four interceptions.

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Rick Stewart/Getty Images

Denver 31, Green Bay 24
January 25, 1998
Qualcomm Stadium (San Diego, CA)
MVP: Terrell Davis (RB), Denver

- Davis (157 rushing yards) set a Super Bowl record by scoring three rushing touchdowns.
- Davis' 1-yard touchdown run with 1:45 to play snapped a 24-24 tie.
- John Elway (12 of 22, 123 yards) ran for a TD that put Denver ahead, 14-7.
- The Broncos snapped the NFC's Super Bowl win streak at 13 games.

Denver 34, Atlanta 19
January 31, 1999
Pro Player Stadium (Miami, FL)
MVP: John Elway (QB), Denver

- Elway, playing his final game, threw for 336 yards and rushed for a TD.
- Terrell Davis rushed for 102 yards and Rod Smith had 152 receiving yards, including an 80-yard TD catch.
- Howard Griffith scored on two short touchdown runs for the Broncos, who became first AFC team in 19 years to win consecutive Super Bowls.

St. Louis 23, Tennessee 16
January 30, 2000
Georgia Dome (Atlanta, GA)
MVP: Kurt Warner (QB), St. Louis

- Warner completed 24 of 45 passes for 414 yards and a pair of TDs.
- The Titans tied the game after trailing, 16-0, before Isaac Bruce's 73-yard touchdown catch with 1:54 to play gave the Rams the lead for good.
- Mike Jones preserved the win when he tackled the Titans' Kevin Dyson at St. Louis' 1-yard line as time expired.

Baltimore 34, N.Y. Giants 7
January 28, 2001
Raymond James Stadium (Tampa, FL)
MVP: Ray Lewis (LB), Baltimore

- Lewis helped force five turnovers and kept New York's offense from scoring.
- Brandon Stokley's 38-yard TD catch from Trent Dilfer made it 7-0.
- The teams combined for three TDs in a span of 36 seconds, which included back-to-back kickoff returns by the Giants' Ron Dixon (97 yards) and the Ravens' Jermaine Lewis (84 yards).

New England 20, St. Louis 17
February 3, 2002
Superdome (New Orleans, LA)
MVP: Tom Brady (QB), New England

- Brady completed 16 of 27 passes for 145 yards and one touchdown.
- Adam Vinatieri's 48-yard field goal as time expired gave the Patriots the victory, making it the first Super Bowl won on the final play.
- Although the Rams had more total yards, 427-267, New England forced three turnovers that led to 17 points.

New England 32, Carolina 29
February 1, 2004
Reliant Stadium (Houston, TX)
MVP: Tom Brady (QB), New England

- Brady completed 32 of 48 passes for 354 yards and three touchdowns.
- Adam Vinatieri's 41-yard FG with four seconds left snapped a 29-29 tie and capped a fourth quarter that saw a Super Bowl-record 37 points scored.
- Carolina's Jake Delhomme threw three touchdown passes, including an 85-yarder to Muhsin Muhammad.

JOHN ELWAY
The Broncos QB, who helped snap the NFC's Super Bowl dominance, won back-to-back Super Bowl titles before retiring.

Al Bello/Getty Images

Tampa Bay 48, Oakland 21
January 26, 2003
Qualcomm Stadium (San Diego, CA)
MVP: Dexter Jackson (S), Tampa Bay

- Jackson grabbed the first two of Tampa Bay's five interceptions.
- The Buccaneers returned three interceptions for touchdowns—two by Dwight Smith and the third by Derrick Brooks.
- This was the first time the NFL's top offense (Oakland) and top defense (Tampa) had met in the Super Bowl.

New England 24, Philadelphia 21
February 6, 2005
ALLTEL Stadium (Jacksonville, FL)
MVP: Deion Branch (WR), New England

- Branch had 11 catches for 133 yards as New England won its third Super Bowl in four seasons.
- Tom Brady completed 23 of 33 passes for 236 yards and two TDs.
- Corey Dillon's 2-yard touchdown run with 13:44 to play broke a 14-14 tie.
- The second of Rodney Harrison's two interceptions sealed the Patriots' win.

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THE START OF SOMETHING SUPER

Even amid tension and turmoil, organizers of the first Super Bowl knew they had a winning formula.

by Michael MacCambridge

For seven years it raged on, the battle between the upstart American Football League and the established National Football League.

Though a tense truce was announced on June 8, 1966—along with the news that the two leagues would stage a world championship game at the end of each season—the animosity that fueled the near-ruinous war between the leagues would not soon be forgotten.

Focus on Sport/Getty Images

It was in this context that the biggest football game in the world was created, in short order and out of whole cloth, by NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle and his aides at the league office. And the intervening 40 years of the Super Bowl's evolution haven't erased the original, hastily assembled blueprint.

When Rozelle left the Warwick Hotel in New York after the press conference that June evening in 1966, he had solved one problem but faced a raft of new ones. CBS, the NFL's television partner of the era, was furious with the news of the merger. The NFL Championship Game—for which CBS had paid $1.1 million for broadcast rights—had instantly been reduced to a very expensive semifinal contest, and both CBS and NBC (which carried AFL games) would be allowed to televise the first title game between the leagues.

Controversy had also been brewing about what would become of the several unsigned "futures" draft choices to which teams in both leagues claimed rights. Finally, the merger itself couldn't be finalized without congressional approval, and there was doubt whether that could be achieved in time to schedule a world championship for that season.

In late June, Rozelle appointed a committee, consisting of himself and the merger's two main architects—Dallas Cowboys president and general manager Tex Schramm and the AFL founder and Kansas City Chiefs owner Lamar Hunt—along with two other owners from each league to firm up all the details of the agreement, which would be consummated with the 1970 season.

It would take the committee 18 months to finalize all the details on the merger, but they had precious little time to organize the first world championship game. Congressional approval didn't come until October 20, at which time the leagues had not yet agreed on either a site or a date for the game. Rozelle was keen to stage the game in Pasadena, but the Tournament of Roses committee, still looking on the pro game as an uncouth interloper, didn't want their Rose Bowl being overshadowed by a professional championship a week or two later. It wasn't until December 1 that the NFL finalized the date and site for the first game between league champions: January 15, 1967, in the Los Angeles Coliseum.

The game's name was introduced in passing, with some reluctance. At one of the first meetings of the merger committee, Lamar Hunt was inquiring about the date of the game. "Should there be a one-week or two-week break before the championship game?" he asked.

"Wait," said one of the other committee members, unsure whether Hunt was talking about the league championship games or the new world championship game. "Which one do you mean?"

"You know," explained Hunt. "The last game. The final game. The Super Bowl." Hunt had been seized with the idea for the name by watching his children playing with the novelty hit of the year, the Wham-O company's high-bouncing Super Ball. In some of his preliminary discussions with other committee members, he'd taken to referring to it by that name.

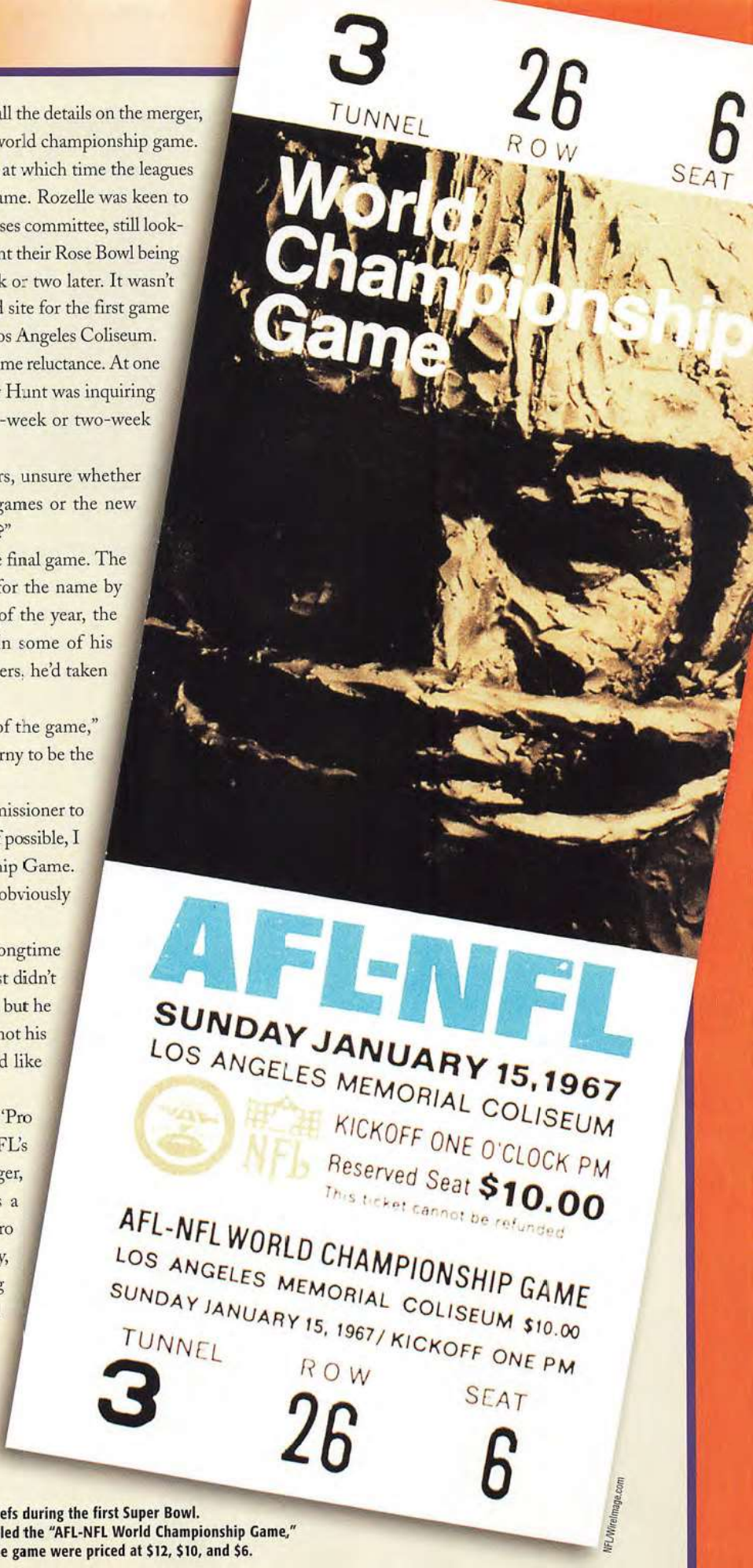
"But nobody ever said let's make that the name of the game," says Hunt. "Far from it, we all agreed it was far too corny to be the name of the new title game."

In a July 25 letter to Rozelle, Hunt urged the commissioner to come up with a catchy name for the new title game. "If possible, I believe we should 'coin a phrase' for the Championship Game. ...I have kiddingly called it the 'Super Bowl,' which obviously can be improved upon."

Rozelle agreed. He actively disliked the name. Longtime league executive Don Weiss recalled that Rozelle "just didn't like the word 'super.' Pete was a pretty regular person, but he was a stickler on words and grammar, and 'super' was not his idea of a good word. He thought 'super' was a word like 'neat' or 'gee-whiz.' It had no sophistication."

Rozelle would have liked to call the game the 'Pro Bowl,' but that name was already taken by the NFL's All-Star game. For years, in speculation about a merger, writers had been referring to a proposed game as a "World Series of football," but Rozelle, who had seen pro football eclipse Major League Baseball in popularity, was obviously not taken with that idea. After long deliberation, the commissioner announced in the fall that the game would be known as "the AFL-NFL World Championship Game."

It didn't matter. Hunt's pet term had already begun generating momentum. Headline writers, commentators, and players alike were using the



NFL/WireImage.com

Left: The Packers' Elijah Pitts (No. 22) in action against the Chiefs during the first Super Bowl. Green Bay beat Kansas City, 35-10, in what at the time was called the "AFL-NFL World Championship Game," on January 15, 1967, at the Los Angeles Coliseum. Tickets to the game were priced at $12, $10, and $6.

term Super Bowl even before the first game was played, and networks had taken to referring to the game as "Super Sunday." When an NFL Films crew shot its first reel of film at the game, the sound cue given was "Super Bowl, reel one."

A curious dichotomy accompanied the advance buildup to the game. So many events in the pantheon of American sports were built on generations of tradition; the World Series, the Rose Bowl, the Kentucky Derby, and the Indianapolis 500 were all more than 50 years old at the time. The Super Bowl promised to be, in terms of the press coverage and television audience, the biggest event of them all—the ultimate game in what was by then the nation's most popular sport—but it had none of the tradition of the other marquee events.

AP WWP

Pete Rozelle (second from left) is flanked by (left to right) Browns president Art Modell, Cowboys president Tex Schramm, AFL Commissioner Milt Woodard, and Chiefs president Lamar Hunt during congressional hearings on the AFL-NFL merger.

So from the very first stages of planning, Rozelle emphasized that he wanted the game freighted with a sense of monument and spectacle that could match or exceed the pageantry associated with the Rose or Orange Bowls.

The participants were determined on January 1, when the Green Bay Packers edged Dallas, 34-27, in the NFL Championship Game, and the Kansas City Chiefs routed the two-time defending league champion Buffalo Bills, 31-7, in the AFL Championship Game.

While Chiefs cornerback Fred Williamson garnered some publicity with his brash predictions of the damage he'd do to the Packers' receivers, the focus of the pregame speculation rested squarely on the shoulders of Green Bay coach Vince Lombardi.

By this time, Lombardi was already a legend within the NFL, having won four league titles in the previous six seasons. But he was well aware that a Packers loss in the first Super Bowl would invalidate not just Green Bay's claim to the world championship in 1966, but in each of the previous years as well. Lombardi had wanted to come to Los Angeles the day before the game, as the Packers would for a typical road game, but Rozelle insisted they arrive a full week before kickoff, to increase the game's exposure in front of the national press. The coach relented, but had his team take up residence in Santa Barbara, 90 minutes away from the bustle (and nightlife) of L.A.

In one of the daily interview sessions, Lombardi slowly boiled while a reporter cited a long list of reasons why the Chiefs couldn't hope to compete with the Packers.

"Thank you," said Lombardi through gritted teeth. "That was nice. But those people on the other side of the field don't realize that the championship has already been won. This is their chance. For seven years, we've been saying they aren't as good as we are. That's fine. But suppose they are? How can I convince them in advance that the championship game has already been settled? I think we'd better wait and play the game, if that's all right with the gentlemen of the press, of course."

Vic Stein/WireImage.com

The tension wasn't felt merely by the Packers but throughout the league. The week before kickoff had a keen sense of anticipation, possessing an element of the unknown nearly unprecedented in American sports history. There hadn't been so much as a scrimmage between the two leagues in the more than seven years of the AFL's existence. The owners from the two leagues were brought together during the week for a strained gathering that the Giants' Wellington Mara recalled as "similar to the feeling onboard the USS Missouri."

The other events the week before the game were relatively modest. The Friday night "commissioner's party," which would become legendary for its lavish spread in future years, was that first year "just cold cuts at the Statler Hilton," said Rozelle. There was $250,000 spent to entertain the media (more than 1,000 credentials having been issued for the game), with league-sponsored outings to either Santa Anita Racetrack or Disneyland on the Saturday

Pete Rozelle wanted pageantry, including legendary trumpeter Al Hirt, marching bands, and balloons.

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

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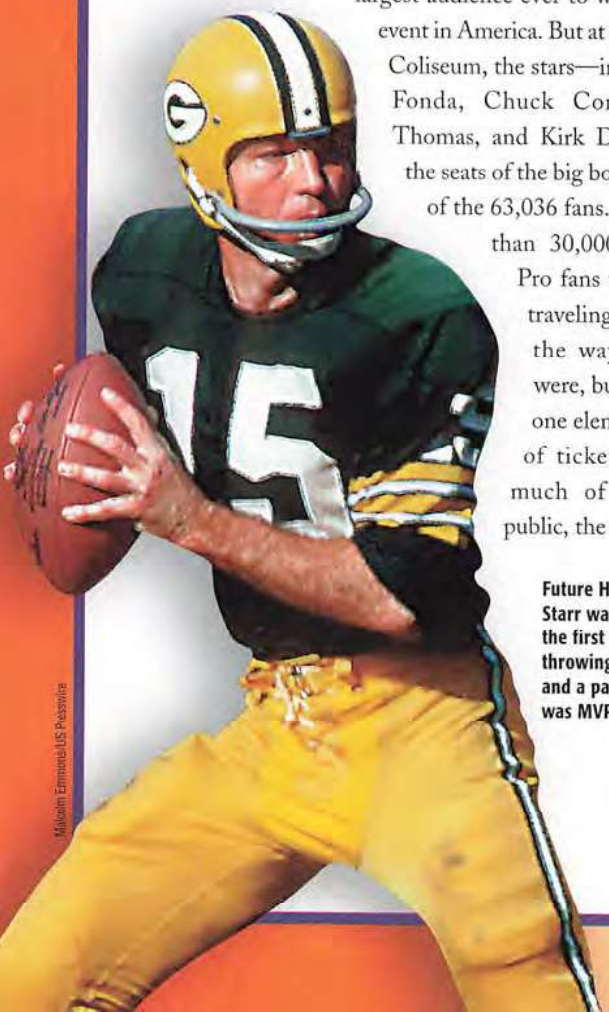
prior to the game. Mickey Herskowitz, then working in the AFL league office, recalled, "Pete said, when the press left the first world championship game, he just wanted to hear them saying, 'Man, this is a lot better than the World Series.'"

The first Super Sunday dawned with many of the elements Rozelle desired in place. In addition to having both the Grambling College and University of Arizona marching bands play during pregame festivities, there were majorettes carrying banners representing every professional team. There also was a glimpse of the future—two stuntmen wearing rocket packs, who took off from the field and, even more impressively, landed safely later. That first game also featured many elements that would be associated with future Super Bowls: Before the game, hundreds of pigeons were released from a cage, and another cage launched thousands of helium-filled balloons (a Rozelle favorite). Prior to the kickoff, a team of Air Force jets did a flyover above the Coliseum. Trumpeter Al Hirt headlined the pregame ceremonies.

AP WWP

Pete Rozelle (left) presents the first world championship trophy to Vince Lombardi. In 1970, the Super Bowl trophy was renamed in honor of the Green Bay coach.

The game itself would be watched by 65 million people, the largest audience ever to watch a sporting event in America. But at the Los Angeles Coliseum, the stars—including Henry Fonda, Chuck Connors, Danny Thomas, and Kirk Douglas—sat in the seats of the big bowl with the rest of the 63,036 fans. That left more than 30,000 empty seats. Pro fans weren't used to traveling to bowl games the way college fans were, but that was only one element of the lack of ticket demand. To much of the sporting public, the outcome of the game was considered a foregone conclusion, with the NFL's vast superiority over the upstart AFL being an article of faith throughout the country.



Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

Future Hall of Famer Bart Starr was voted MVP of the first Super Bowl after throwing for 250 yards and a pair of TDs. He also was MVP of Super Bowl II.

But for the players and coaches involved, of course, the uncertainty and doubt was excruciating. The tension was evident in the tunnel prior to the game. Kansas City's Buck Buchanan and Bobby Bell were so keyed up that they had tears running down their cheeks before taking the field. As the Packers ran onto the field, Lombardi entered alongside them at a walk. He looked miserable. A few minutes before kickoff, CBS' Frank Gifford interviewed Lombardi and found him "so tense he was shaking like a leaf."

The rest would become part of the lore: the Packers' sluggish first half, in which they mustered only a 14-10 lead; the second-half kickoff that required a television-mandated "do-over" (NBC had returned late from its commercial break, and the first kick was whistled dead while the ball was in the air); Willie Wood's key third-quarter interception that swung the momentum in the Packers' favor; the sight of Fred "The Hammer" Williamson himself needing to be carried off on a stretcher in the fourth quarter; and the 35-10 final score that vindicated all the Packers' claims to greatness.

In a sense, the Super Bowl could not fully embrace the spectacle that it would later assume during those first four games, prior to the merger being consummated with the 1970 season. In that first quartet of games, when the AFL and NFL identities remained so distinct, there was too much at stake, too much left to prove.

That was why Lombardi looked more relieved than anything during the postgame celebration after what would eventually become known as Super Bowl I. Surrounded by the national press in the Coliseum's home locker room, Lombardi cradled a game ball, and said, "The players gave it to me. It's the NFL ball. It catches better and kicks a little better than the AFL ball."

The boast would go unchallenged for nearly two more years, until the Thursday before Super Bowl III in Miami, when Joe Namath guaranteed a Jets win over the Colts. Three days later, on the biggest stage in sports, the game's biggest star, from the country's biggest city, directed what was arguably the biggest upset in sports history. The Super Bowl truly arrived that day. And nothing in pro football has been quite the same since. ■

Michael MacCambridge is the author of America's Game: The Epic Story of How Pro Football Captured A Nation *and the editor of* The ESPN College Football Encyclopedia. *Previously, he worked as a columnist and critic at the* Austin American-Statesman, *writing about movies, music, and popular culture. He lives in St. Louis.*

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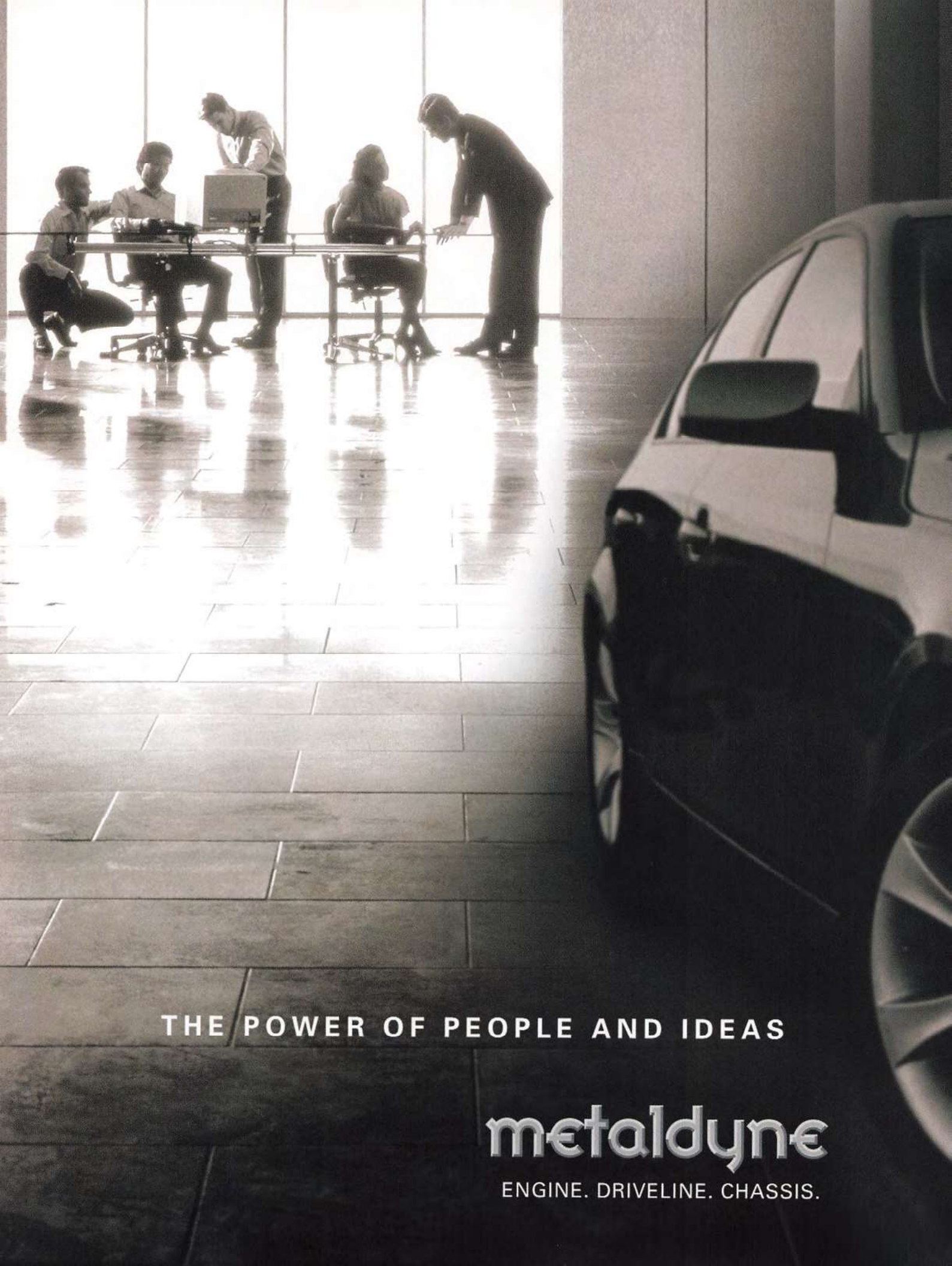
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THE ROAD TO FORTY

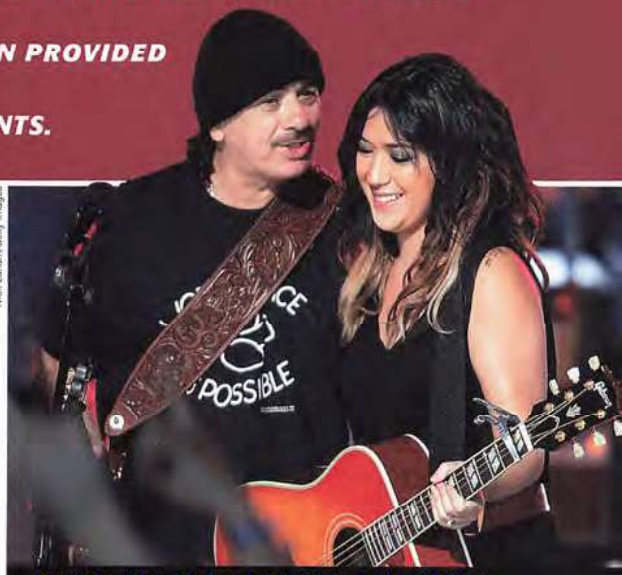
DETROIT 02.05.06

There were 32 starting points along "The Road to Forty." And in every NFL city, fans and teams alike dreamed that this road would lead them to the ultimate destination: Detroit on the first Sunday in February.

On the following pages, you will relive all the stops, starts, and side trips of the National Football League's 86th season. Discover how the best of the AFC and NFC found their way to Ford Field and Super Bowl XL.

WEEK 1: SAINTS PROVIDE A STIRRING START

THE FIRST WEEK OF THE 2005 NFL SEASON WAS PACKED WITH AMAZING STORIES, BUT NONE WAS MORE INSPIRATIONAL THAN THE SAINTS, WHOSE DRAMATIC WIN PROVIDED AN EMOTIONAL LIFT FOR NEW ORLEANS' BELEAGUERED RESIDENTS.



Nick Laham/Getty Images

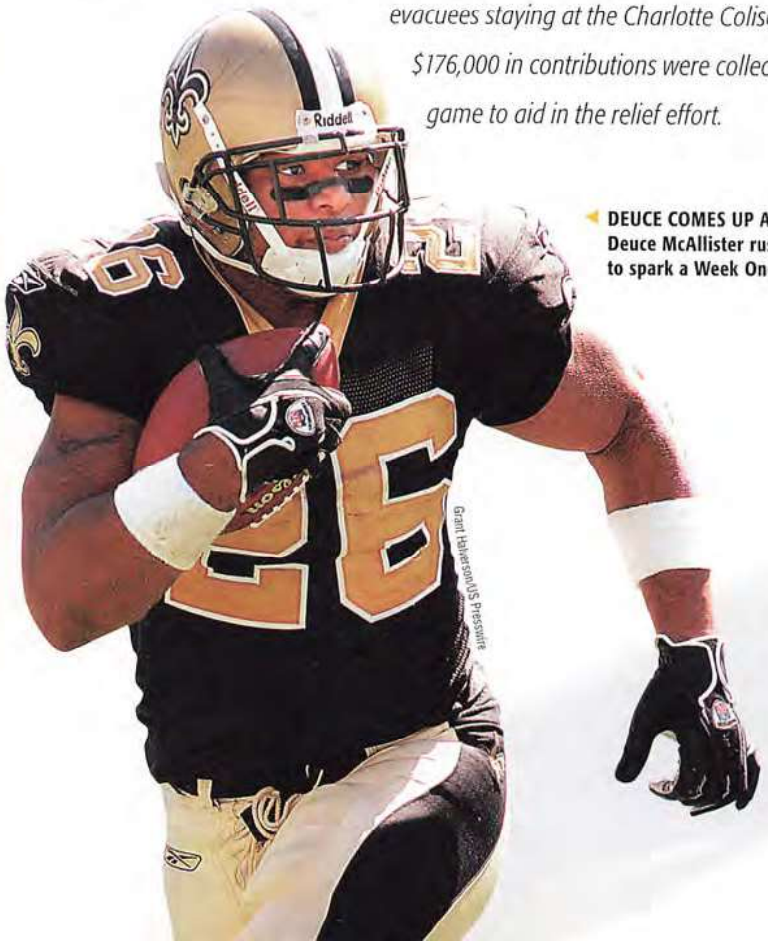
▲ **SOUNDS LIKE FOOTBALL. Carlos Santana (l) and Michelle Branch perform prior to the Patriots-Raiders opener.**

Barely two weeks removed from the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina– *a storm that displaced more than 450,000 people from the city–the Saints played with unrelenting resolve to edge the Carolina Panthers in an NFC South clash. Aaron Brooks completed 18 of 24 passes and Deuce McAllister ran for a pair of touchdowns, setting the stage for John Carney's 47-yard field goal with three seconds to play that snapped a 20-20 tie and sent New Orleans players and fans into euphoria.*

"In the back of our minds, we know we have to give [the people] one tiny bit of hope," said Brooks after the game. "We have complete faith in what we are doing because every time we go out there, it is our job to give them hope that every day will be a better day."

Following the victory, the Saints presented two game balls–one to New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin, who had written a poignant letter that head coach Jim Haslett read to his team before the contest, and the second to all the victims of Katrina.

The Panthers proved to be gracious hosts. Carolina players donated 350 tickets to evacuees staying at the Charlotte Coliseum and $176,000 in contributions were collected at the game to aid in the relief effort.



Grant Halverson/US Presswire

◀ **DEUCE COMES UP ACES. The Saints' Deuce McAllister rushed for two TDs to spark a Week One win at Carolina.**

NFL OPENING KICKOFF Sprint

PATRIOTS' DAY

NFL Opening Kickoff 2005—and the Road To Super Bowl XL—began, fittingly, in Foxborough, where the two-time defending champion Patriots hosted the Oakland Raiders. The Gillette Stadium pregame show, the centerpiece of a three-city celebration, featured live performances by Green Day, Santana, and Ozzy Osborne, and was capped by country artist Trisha Yearwood singing the national anthem. Across the country outside the Los Angeles Coliseum, site of Super Bowl I, Maroon 5 and Kanye West performed live, while footage of The Rolling Stones' August 31 concert in Detroit also was included. As for the game, Tom Brady threw for 306 yards and fired TDs to Deion Branch and Tim Dwight, while Corey Dillon ran for a pair of scores as the Patriots earned a 30-20 decision, marking their 21st straight home victory.

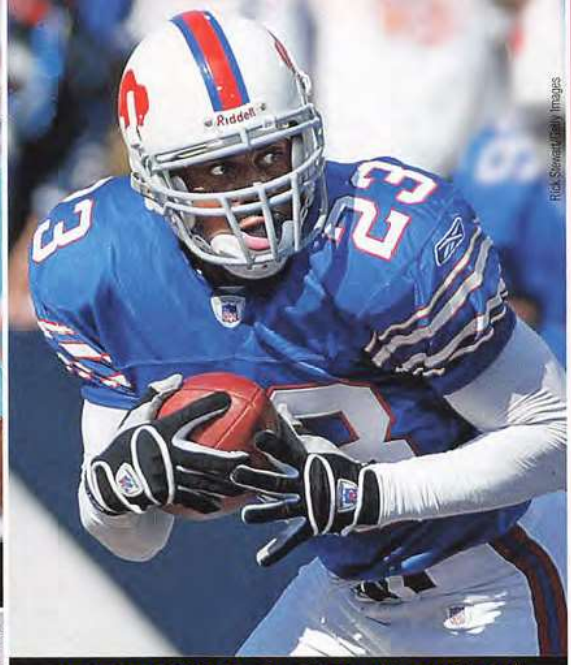
Nick Laham/Getty Images

"We felt like we were representing the Gulf area. We heard from people: 'I might not have my house, but I got my Saints.'"

— Saints tight end Ernie Conwell after the team's win at Carolina.

David Drapkin/Getty Images

▲ DOLPHINS SHOW. Nick Saban made his Miami coaching debut a successful one with a 34-10 victory over Denver.



Rick Stewart/Getty Images

▲ TROY STATES HIS CASE. The Bills' Troy Vincent picked off two passes in Buffalo's 22-7 victory over the Texans.

Donald Miralle/Getty Images

▲ NEW QB IN TOWN. Drew Bledsoe was outstanding in his Dallas debut, throwing for three touchdowns at San Diego.

Doug Benc/Getty Images

▲ JAG MAKES A SNAG. Jimmy Smith prepares to make one of his two TD catches during Jacksonville's victory over Seattle.

New On The Job

Three head coaches debuted in Week One and two of them came away smiling. Nick Saban's Dolphins rode the play of QB Gus Frerotte (24 of 36, 275 yards, 2 TDs) to overwhelm the Broncos, 34-10. "It's important how you respond to good things and bad things," said Saban, who came to Miami after five years at Louisiana State. "We should enjoy this for 24 hours, but this is one game in a long season." Mike Nolan's first game at the helm of the 49ers was similarly successful. San Francisco erupted for 21 second-quarter points against St. Louis, then held on for a 28-25 win when cornerback Michael Adams intercepted Marc Bulger with 52 seconds remaining. Falling on the other side of the ledger was Romeo Crennel, who made his first appearance as coach of Cleveland. The Browns had two TDs called back, contributing to their 27-13 setback to Cincinnati. Rudi Johnson rushed for 126 yards for the Bengals, who won their first road opener since 1995.

Opening Analysis

Two teams better known for outstanding offense turned in sparkling defensive efforts to win their openers. The Colts kept host Baltimore off the scoreboard until the game's final 13 seconds while collecting a 24-7 victory. Indy picked off three passes, including one that Cato June returned 30 yards for a TD. In Kansas City, the Chiefs' defense didn't surrender a point until 29 seconds remained in their 27-7 triumph over the Jets. Cornerback Patrick Surtain, signed away from the Dolphins during the offseason, had an interception and the Chiefs forced seven fumbles, recovering two. In that same game, 31-year-old Jets punter Ben Graham, a native of Australia, became the oldest rookie to start an NFL season…In a rematch of the NFC title game, Atlanta scored a pair of first-quarter touchdowns and that proved enough to defeat the visiting Eagles, 14-10. ■

WEEK 1

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Thursday, September 8

@ New England 30 ..... Oakland 20

Sunday, September 11

@ Buffalo 22 ..... Houston 7
Cincinnati 27 ..... @ Cleveland 13
Dallas 28 ..... @ San Diego 24
@ Detroit 17 ..... Green Bay 3
@ Jacksonville 26 ..... Seattle 14
@ Kansas City 27 ..... N.Y. Jets 7
@ Miami 34 ..... Denver 10
New Orleans 23 ..... @ Carolina 20
@ N.Y. Giants 42 ..... Arizona 19
@ Pittsburgh 34 ..... Tennessee 7
@ San Francisco 28 ..... St. Louis 25
Tampa Bay 24 ..... @ Minnesota 13
@ Washington 9 ..... Chicago 7
Indianapolis 24 ..... @ Baltimore 7

Monday, September 12

@ Atlanta 14 ..... Philadelphia 10

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Willie Parker (RB, Steelers) – Ran for 161 yards on 22 carries (averaging 7.3 yards per attempt) and scored a touchdown in win over Titans.

AFC Defensive Player

Gary Brackett (LB, Colts) – Had two interceptions that stopped scoring threats, made nine tackles, and had one QB pressure in win at Baltimore.

AFC Special Teams Player

Josh Scobee (K, Jaguars) – Kicked four FGs and had four kickoffs go for touchbacks in win over Seahawks.

NFC Offensive Player

Drew Bledsoe (QB, Cowboys) – In Dallas debut, completed 18 of 24 passes for 226 yards, three TDs, and no interceptions to beat San Diego.

NFC Defensive Player

Bryant Young (DT, 49ers) – Credited with four tackles and three sacks in home triumph over St. Louis.

NFC Special Teams Player

John Carney (K, Saints) – Made all three field goal attempts, including game-winning 47-yarder with three seconds remaining, against Carolina.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Carnell Williams (RB, Buccaneers) – Rushed for 148 yards, highlighted by a 71-yard TD, in win at Minnesota.

WEEK 2: SOME EARLY-SEASON SURPRISES

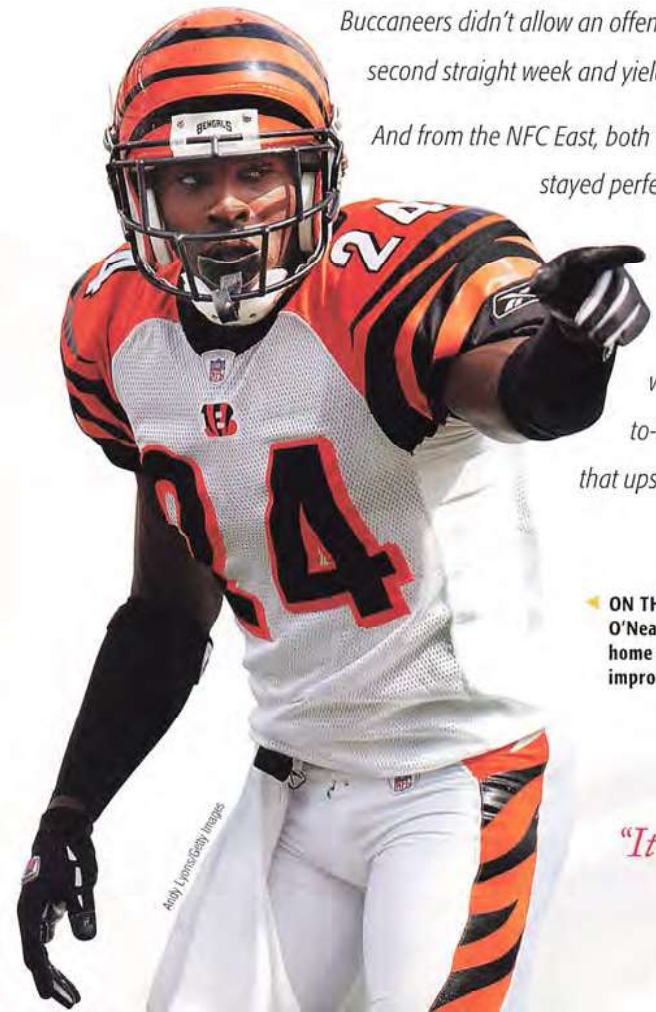
THE NFL'S UNDEFEATED RANKS WERE TRIMMED TO SEVEN BY THE END OF WEEK TWO. AND WHILE TWO OF THESE TEAMS—THE STEELERS AND COLTS—WON DIVISION TITLES IN 2004, THE OTHERS ALL MISSED THE PLAYOFF CUT. BUT WOULD THIS YEAR BE DIFFERENT?

Building upon their opening-day successes, *some in overwhelming fashion and others in nail-biters, they all solidified their standing as teams to watch in 2005. Pittsburgh recorded its 16th straight regular-season win, with Hines Ward catching two touchdown passes and the Steelers' defense breaking loose for eight sacks in a 27-7 triumph over the Texans. And although Indianapolis had yet to hit its offensive stride, the team's defense was again superb, recording six sacks and limiting the Jaguars to 12 first downs in a 10-3 victory.*

Seeing those two clubs start off 2-0 wouldn't be unexpected, but none of the other five still-unbeaten teams finished above .500 a year ago. Cincinnati kept pace with the Steelers in the AFC North by erupting for a 37-8 win over Minnesota, while Kansas City fought off the Raiders, 23-17, to move atop the AFC West.

Tampa Bay—the last Super Bowl champ to come from the NFC—improved to 2-0 for the first time in five years by shutting down Buffalo, 19-3. The Buccaneers didn't allow an offensive touchdown for the second straight week and yielded just 147 total yards.

And from the NFC East, both the Giants and the Redskins stayed perfect on the young season, with New York handling the Saints, 27-10, while Washington struck late with a pair of Mark Brunell-to-Santana Moss TD passes that upstaged the Cowboys, 14-13.



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

◀ **ON THE PROWL. The Bengals' Deltha O'Neal picked off three passes in a home win over Minnesota. Cincinnati improved to 2-0 with the triumph.**

Rusty Kennedy/AP WWP

▲ **FIVE BY FIVE. Donovan McNabb fired five touchdown passes in leading the Eagles to their first win of the year.**

RALLYING FOR A CAUSE

The league, its teams, and players put their collective weight behind the cause of assisting the victims of Hurricane Katrina, organizing a series of events during "Hurricane Relief Weekend" that culminated with a telethon during an unprecedented *Monday Night Football* doubleheader. More than 35 current and former NFL players, including Hall of Famers John Elway and Art Shell, and Louisiana native (and current Jets All-Pro center) Kevin Mawae, answered phones during the ABC/ESPN-televised fundraiser that raised $5 million for the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund. In addition, the Saints and Giants contributed $1 million of the gate proceeds from their game, which attracted more than 68,000 fans to Giants Stadium, while the NFL Players Association announced a $1 million donation to assist the Gulf Coast recovery on behalf of NFL players. The league's broadcast partners and sponsors also took

Mike Ehrmann/WireImage.com

"It was one of the greatest moments in sports for me."
— Redskins coach Joe Gibbs, winner of three Super Bowls, after his team rallied late for a 14-13 win at Dallas.

Al Messerschmidt/Wirelmage.com

▲ BIG GRINS IN BIG "D". Assistant coach Joe Bugel (l) and head coach Joe Gibbs celebrate the Redskins' win at Dallas.

Matt Cashore/US Presswire

▲ WIN-DY CITY. Thomas Jones breaks free for a second-half touchdown during Chicago's 38-6 home win over the Lions.

Larry Maus/Wirelmage.com

▲ HAWK GROUNDS IT OUT. Seattle's Shaun Alexander picks up a portion of his 144 rushing yards against the Falcons.

part, and contributions were accepted at all 16 games, pushing the three-week total generated by the league for hurricane relief to more than $21 million.

Panthers Pick Up The Pace

It wasn't the Super Bowl and neither team was in particularly pristine form, but the Panthers could still claim a measure of satisfaction with their victory over the Patriots in a rematch of Super Bowl XXXVIII combatants. "It wasn't a revenge game or a get-back game, because that was a long time ago," insisted Carolina QB Jake Delhomme. "This was just a big win for us." Sparking the triumph was Stephen Davis, who ran for three TDs as part of a 77-yard day and became the first back to score three times against New England since Curtis Martin in 2000. John Kasay kicked a pair of long field goals—from 51 and 52 yards—and Carolina's defense did its part, forcing three turnovers and limiting the Patriots to 39 yards rushing. It marked just the third loss in New England's last 30 regular-season games.

Second Takes

The Eagles triumphed as Donovan McNabb threw four of his five touchdown passes in the opening 19 minutes—including tosses of 68 and 42 yards to Terrell Owens—to fuel a 42-3 triumph over the 49ers. Philly totaled a team-record 583 offensive yards…LaDainian Tomlinson set an NFL record by rushing for a TD in his 14th straight game, but the Chargers were clipped by Denver, 20-17, on Jason Elam's 41-yard field goal with five seconds to play…The Seahawks' Shaun Alexander rushed for a Week Two-best 144 yards and a score, sending Seattle past the Falcons, 21-18…The Packers retired the late Reggie White's No. 92 uniform, while the Cowboys inducted three players—Michael Irvin, Troy Aikman and Emmitt Smith—into their Ring of Honor…Playing for the first time against the team he led to two Super Bowls, Arizona QB Kurt Warner completed 29 of 42 passes for 327 yards, but the Rams held on for a 17-12 victory…Prior to Dallas' loss to Washington, Bill Parcells-coached teams were a stunning 77-0 when leading by at least 13 points heading into the fourth quarter. ■

WEEK 2
Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, September 18

@ Carolina 27	New England 17
@ Chicago 38	Detroit 6
@ Cincinnati 37	Minnesota 8
Cleveland 26	@ Green Bay 24
@ Denver 20	San Diego 17
@ Indianapolis 10	Jacksonville 3
@ N.Y. Jets 17	Miami 7
@ Philadelphia 42	San Francisco 3
Pittsburgh 27	@ Houston 7
St. Louis 17	@ Arizona 12
@ Seattle 21	Atlanta 18
@ Tampa Bay 19	Buffalo 3
@ Tennessee 25	Baltimore 10
Kansas City 23	@ Oakland 17

Monday, September 19

N.Y. Giants 27	@ New Orleans 10*
Washington 14	@ Dallas 13

Played at Giants Stadium

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Trent Dilfer (QB, Browns) – Passed for 336 yards and three TDs, posting a 131.8 passer rating, to beat Packers.

AFC Defensive Player

Deltha O'Neal (CB, Bengals) – Made three interceptions, defensed two other passes, and had team-high eight tackles in win over Minnesota.

AFC Special Teams Player

Hunter Smith (P, Colts) – Averaged 46.1 yards on seven punts; three of his punts forced Jacksonville to take possession inside its own 10-yard line.

NFC Offensive Player

Santana Moss (WR, Redskins) – Had 39-yard and 70-yard TD catches in fourth quarter to rally Washington past Dallas.

NFC Defensive Player

Shelton Quarles (LB, Buccaneers) – Made 10 tackles and sacked QB J.P. Losman for a safety in win vs. Buffalo.

NFC Special Teams Player

Bobby Wade (PR, Bears) – Returned punt 73 yards for first career TD in victory over Detroit.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Carnell Williams (RB, Buccaneers) – Won honor for second straight week after gaining 128 rushing yards and scoring a 3-yard TD against Buffalo.

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WEEK 3: HIGH DRAMA ON THE GRIDIRON

THE SEASON'S THIRD WEEK HAD IT ALL: A BATTLE BETWEEN TWO OF THE NFL'S BEST TEAMS, A BIG FOURTH-QUARTER RALLY, A LAST-DITCH SCORING DRIVE, AND A CLUTCH FIELD GOAL IN THE CLOSING SECONDS. AND THAT WAS JUST ONE GAME!

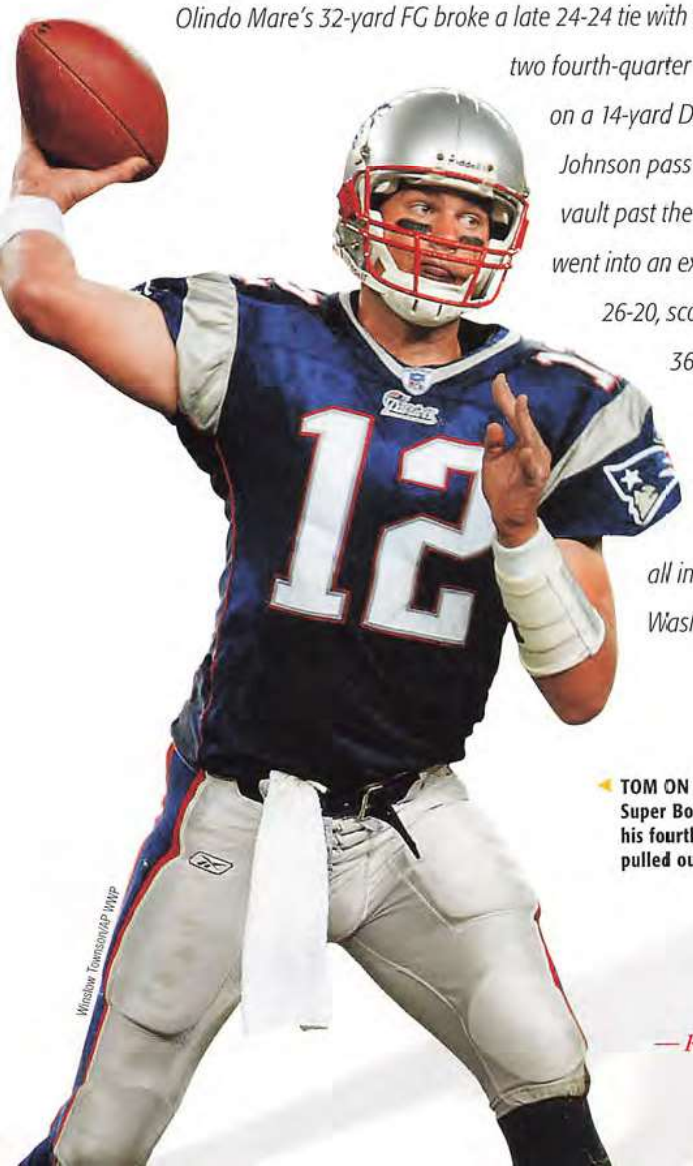
Dan Helms/Corbis

▲ **SUNSHINE STATE. Olindo Mare kicked the game-winning FG with four seconds to play to lift Miami past Carolina.**

Five of the week's contests were decided in the final two minutes or overtime, *headlined by the seesaw clash between New England and Pittsburgh in a rematch of last year's AFC Championship Game. The visiting Patriots again prevailed, 23-20, this time on Adam Vinatieri's 43-yard field goal with one second to play. Yet that drama unfolded only after the Steelers had knotted things on Hines Ward's 4-yard TD catch with 1:21 remaining. The defeat snapped Pittsburgh's 16-game regular-season winning streak and marked second-year QB Ben Roethlisberger's first regular-season loss as a starter.*

In Philadelphia, an ailing David Akers—who re-injured his strained right hamstring on the opening kickoff—fought off the pain to convert a 23-yard field goal in the final moments, lifting the Eagles past the Raiders. Miami triumphed in similar fashion, as Olindo Mare's 32-yard FG broke a late 24-24 tie with the Panthers. Dallas scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns—the second on a 14-yard Drew Bledsoe-to-Keyshawn Johnson pass with 1:51 remaining—to vault past the 49ers, while the Jaguars went into an extra session to beat the Jets, 26-20, scoring on Byron Leftwich's 36-yard strike to Jimmy Smith.

Only four teams remained undefeated, with the Colts, Bengals, and Buccaneers all improving to 3-0, while 2-0 Washington had its bye week.



Winslow Townson/AP Wide World

◀ **TOM ON TARGET. With the two-time Super Bowl MVP completing all 12 of his fourth-quarter passes, the Patriots pulled out a 23-20 win at Pittsburgh.**

INDY'S AMAZING DEFENSE

Indianapolis' third straight win showcased the team's emerging defensive strength. The Colts edged Cleveland, 13-6, and in the process became just the sixth NFL team since World War II to hold its first three opponents to single figures. "We're just flying around, making plays," said cornerback Nick Harper, who had five tackles. "Everybody's in a groove right now." At the same time, Indy's offense was effective enough as Peyton Manning, who completed 19 of 23 passes for 228 yards, became the second-quickest player in NFL history (after Dan Marino) to reach 30,000 passing yards. Edgerrin James rushed for 108 yards, scored the game's only TD, and helped the Colts keep the ball for the game's final 7:40 with a 14-play drive.

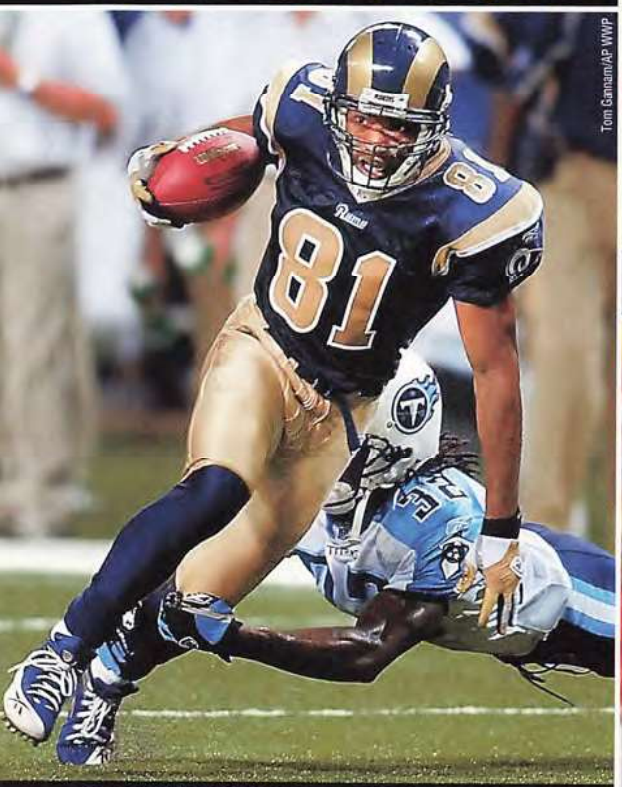
Don Larson/Wirelmage.com

▲ **Dwight Freeney**

"I'm going to need some heart pills here soon."
— Rams wide receiver Torry Holt after a 31-27 win over the Titans, St. Louis' third straight game decided by five points or fewer.

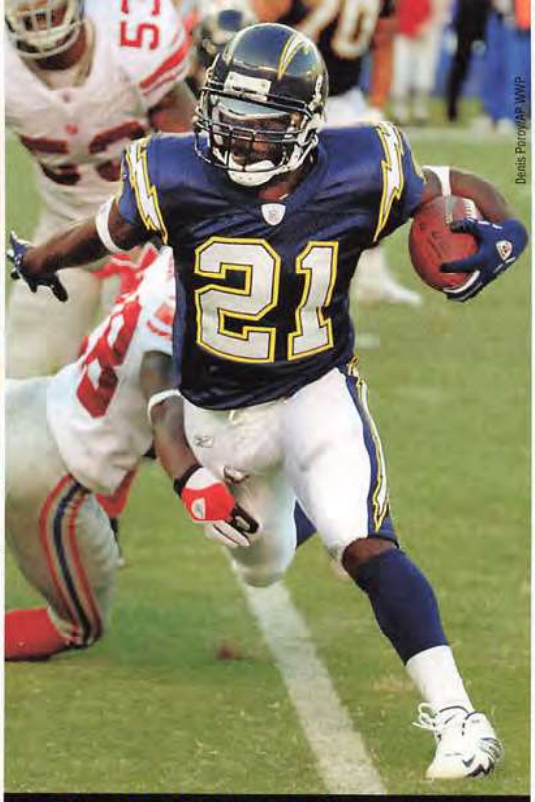
Mike Roemer/AP WWP

▲ CLOSE CALL. Jon Gruden and the Buccaneers made their point in Week Three, defeating Green Bay, 17-16, to improve to 3-0.



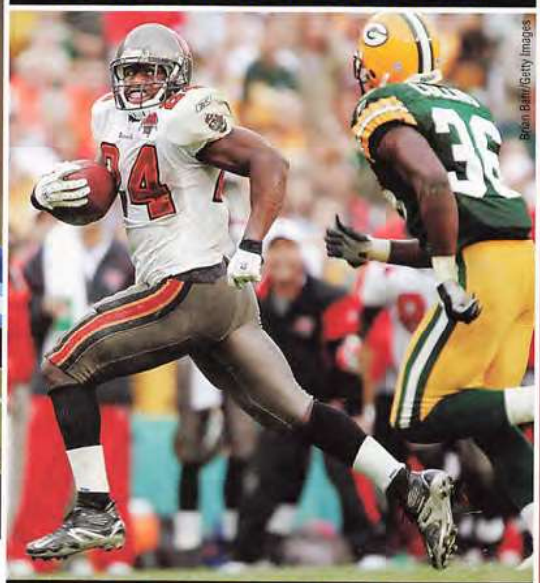
Tom Gannam/AP WWP

▲ NO HOLT-ING HIM BACK. Torry Holt had 163 receiving yards, including a 32-yard TD, in the Rams' victory over Tennessee.



Denis Poroy/AP WWP

▲ DANDY DAY FOR LADAINIAN. The Chargers' star back ran for three TDs and threw for one against the Giants.



Brian Bahr/Getty Images

▲ PUSHING THE PEDAL. "Cadillac" Williams became the first NFL rookie to start off with three straight 100-yard games.

A Young Buc

Carnell "Cadillac" Williams set an NFL record for rushing yards by a rookie in his first three games, leading Tampa Bay to its first win at Lambeau Field since 1989. Williams gained 158 yards in the 17-16 victory over the Packers, giving him a league-leading 434 yards on the season. That bettered the mark of 410 yards by Alan Ameche with the 1955 Baltimore Colts, as Williams also became the first NFL back to start his career with three straight 100-yard games. "There's not a lot of words to describe him," said Tampa Bay cornerback Ronde Barber, who made six tackles on the day. "Just put the film on and you see what you have in this guy." The Bucs scored twice on Brian Griese to Joey Galloway touchdown passes and got a pair of interceptions from Will Allen as they started 3-0 for the first time since 2000.

Three-Peats

Cincinnati improved to 3-0 for the first time in 15 years with a 24-7 victory at Chicago. The Bengals picked off Kyle Orton five times, becoming the first team since the 1971 Browns to intercept five passes in consecutive games…The week's top receiver was Steve Smith, who accounted for 11 receptions, 170 yards, and three touchdowns in Carolina's loss at Miami…Behind three TD passes from Marc Bulger, St. Louis beat Tennessee, 31-27, in the first meeting between the teams since Super Bowl XXXIV…Rod Smith reached 10,000 receiving yards and caught a 12-yard touchdown during Denver's 30-10 win over Kansas City on Monday night. ■

WEEK 3

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, September 25

Atlanta 24 ..... @ Buffalo 16
Cincinnati 24 ..... @ Chicago 7
Dallas 34 ..... @ San Francisco 31
@ Indianapolis 13 ..... Cleveland 6
Jacksonville 26 ..... @ N.Y. Jets 20 (OT)
@ Miami 27 ..... Carolina 24
@ Minnesota 33 ..... New Orleans 16
New England 23 ..... @ Pittsburgh 20
@ Philadelphia 23 ..... Oakland 20
@ St. Louis 31 ..... Tennessee 27
@ Seattle 37 ..... Arizona 12
Tampa Bay 17 ..... @ Green Bay 16
@ San Diego 45 ..... N.Y. Giants 23

Monday, September 26

@ Denver 30 ..... Kansas City 10

Open Dates: Baltimore, Detroit, Houston, Washington

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

LaDainian Tomlinson (RB, Chargers) – Rushed for 192 yards and three TDs, caught six passes, and threw a 26-yard TD in victory over Giants.

AFC Defensive Player

Lance Schulters (S, Dolphins) – Four tackles, one sack, and made a late interception that led to the winning field goal against Carolina.

AFC Special Teams Player

Adam Vinatieri (K, Patriots) – Kicked 43-yard game-winning field goal, his third FG of the day, to beat Steelers.

NFC Offensive Player

Shaun Alexander (RB, Seahawks) – Rushed for 140 yards and scored four times, including three second-half touchdowns, in victory over Arizona.

NFC Defensive Player

Rod Coleman (DT, Falcons) – Had five tackles, two sacks, and one forced fumble while helping Atlanta limit the Bills to 36 passing yards.

NFC Special Teams Player

Josh Bidwell (P, Buccaneers) – Punted six times for a 47.3-yard average, and forced the Packers to frequently take possession deep in their own territory.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Carnell Williams (RB, Buccaneers) – Won third straight award after rushing for 158 yards at Green Bay.

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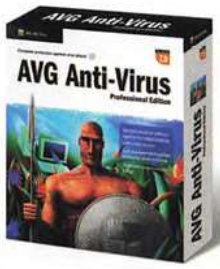

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- ❑ *Dixie Chicks*
- ❑ *Gloria Estefan*
- ❑ *Five for Fighting*
- ❑ *Heart*
- ❑ *Lauryn Hill*
- ❑ *Michael Jackson*
- ❑ *Journey*
- ❑ *Cyndi Lauper*
- ❑ *Jennifer Lopez*
- ❑ *George Michael*
- ❑ *Ozzy Osbourne*
- ❑ *Pink Floyd*
- ❑ *Barbara Streisand*
- ❑ *James Taylor*

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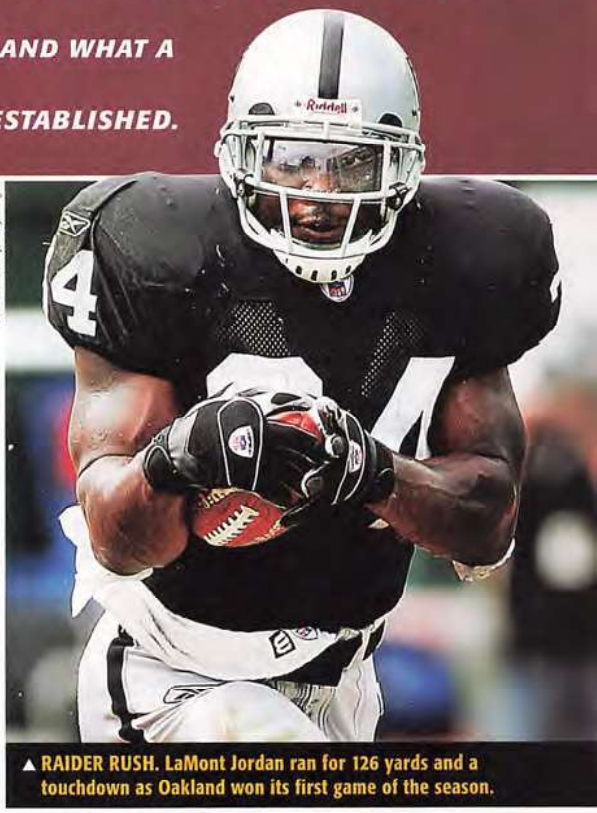
WEEK 4: HOLA FÚTBOL AMERICANO

WITH THE CARDINALS AND 49ERS LEADING THE WAY, THE NFL BROKE NEW GROUND BY HOLDING ITS FIRST REGULAR-SEASON CONTEST OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES. AND WHAT A SUCCESS IT WAS, WITH A LEAGUE ATTENDANCE RECORD BEING ESTABLISHED.



Jonathan Ferrey/Getty Images

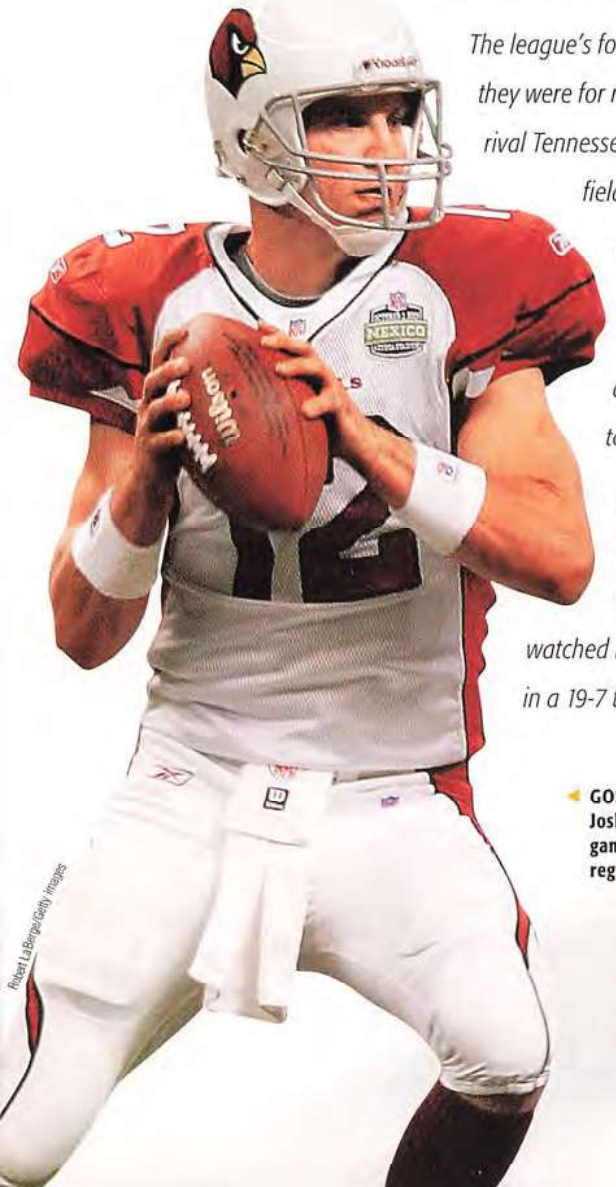
▲ **RAIDER RUSH. LaMont Jordan ran for 126 yards and a touchdown as Oakland won its first game of the season.**

A crowd of 103,467 flocked to Mexico City's Azteca Stadium, *the most fans ever to attend an NFL regular-season game, and they saw Arizona rally for a 31-14 triumph. After San Francisco opened the scoring with a pair of defensive touchdowns, the Cardinals went to work. Quarterback Josh McCown threw for a career-high 385 yards and two TDs and Neil Rackers kicked six field goals—one shy of a league record—including a 48-yarder in the third quarter that put Arizona in the lead for good.*

"This game let the fans here in Mexico, the athletes here in Mexico, and businesses and everybody else know that we're for real," said NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, who was among the capacity crowd.

The league's four undefeated teams again proved they were for real, too. The Colts handled division rival Tennessee, while Cincinnati used two late field goals from Shayne Graham to edge the Texans, 16-10. In the NFC, Washington prevailed in overtime against Seattle, while Tampa Bay's defense stiffened in the final minutes to preserve a 17-13 win over Detroit.

San Antonio and the Alamodome welcomed the Saints for the first of three "home" games. Fans there watched Deuce McAllister rush for 130 yards in a 19-7 triumph over the Bills.



Robert La Barge/Getty Images

◀ **GOSH, JOSH. Arizona quarterback Josh McCown played his best NFL game in front of the league's largest regular-season crowd ever.**

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Brothers Peyton and Eli Manning combined to throw for 560 yards and eight touchdowns without an interception while guiding their respective teams to Week Four victories. Peyton, making his 116th consecutive start, connected with Marvin Harrison for a pair of scores and Edgerrin James rushed for 90 yards in the Colts' 31-10 win over the Titans. "I guess we won't have to answer the question, 'What is wrong with the offense?' now," said Colts coach Tony Dungy after his team accounted for its highest point total of the young season. Eli actually threw for more yards than his older brother, 296 to 264, while directing the Giants to a 44-24 victory over St. Louis. But he didn't gloat. "Peyton and I aren't competitive with each other," said Eli. "I'm always glad for him when he plays well and they're winning." Eli found Plaxico Burress open for two first-half TDs and his 31-yard scoring pass to Jeremy Shockey broke the game open in the third quarter. Through four weeks, the Giants were averaging a league-leading 34.0 ppg.

"Honestly, the kick was perfect. I hit a great ball and unfortunately the upright got right in the way."

— Seattle's Josh Brown, on his 47-yard field goal attempt at the end of regulation that would have beaten the Redskins.

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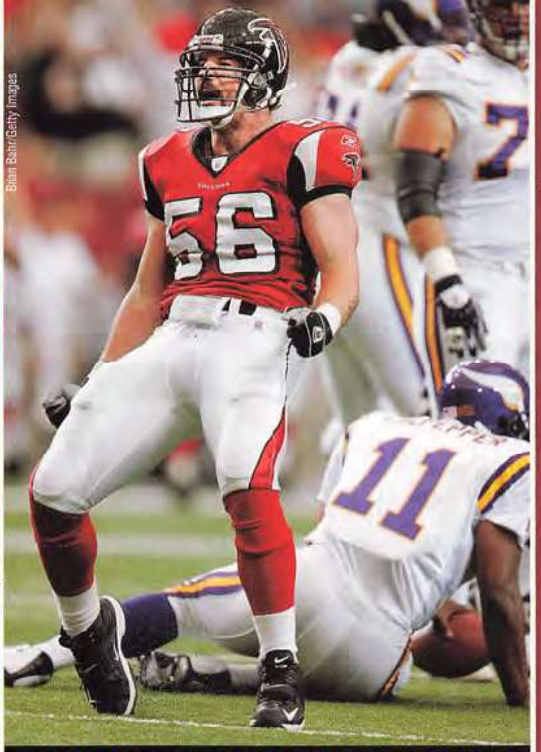
Thomas Jenkin/Wireimage.com

▲ SAGE ADVICE. Head coach Marty Schottenheimer instructs linebacker Ben Leber during the Chargers' win at New England.

Evan Pinkus/Wireimage.com

▲ GIANT EFFORT. Plaxico Burress had 204 receiving yards and caught two touchdown passes in a victory over St. Louis.


Brian Bahr/Getty Images

▲ BREAKING THROUGH. Keith Brooking reacts after making one of Atlanta's nine sacks against Minnesota.

John Rieger/US Presswire

▲ QUITE A DAY FOR L.J. Eagles tight end L.J. Smith had nine catches, including a fourth-quarter TD, against the Chiefs.

Soaring Back

The Eagles posted the week's biggest comeback, defeating the host Chiefs, 37-31, after falling behind by 18 points in the second quarter. Donovan McNabb completed 33 of 48 passes for 369 yards and became the first Philly QB to throw for 300 yards in three straight games. "I was just doing whatever I could to help my team win," said McNabb, who was battling a lower abdomen strain. Kansas City defensive lineman Lionel Dalton was impressed. "He didn't look like he was hurting one bit. He looked like the normal McNabb, one of the greatest quarterbacks in this league." The Chiefs held a 24-6 lead after Dante Hall raced 96 yards with his sixth career kickoff return for a TD, tying an NFL record, but then the Eagles came alive. Terrell Owens, the league-leader in receptions (32) and reception yards (506) through four weeks, caught a seven-yard touchdown right before halftime, igniting Philly to 31 straight points. McNabb threw two second-half TD strikes and Todd France, in his NFL debut, made three field goals, including a 37-yarder that put the Eagles ahead, 27-24, early in the fourth quarter.

Week Four Fodder

San Diego snapped the Patriots' 21-game home-field win streak with a 41-17 triumph at Gillette Stadium. LaDainian Tomlinson extended his NFL record by rushing for a TD in his 16th straight game, and his one-yard scoring run snapped a halftime tie. He finished with 134 rushing yards, the highest total by any back in Week Four…The Ravens limited the Jets to eight first downs and 152 total yards while winning their first game of the year, 13-3. Oakland likewise hit the win column for the first time, thwarting a late Cowboys' drive that reached the three-yard line to take a 19-13 triumph…Atlanta's defense registered nine sacks and kept the Vikings off the scoreboard until the fourth quarter of its 30-10 win…Jarrett Payton, son of the late Walter Payton, appeared in his first NFL game and gained 37 yards on four carries in the Titans' loss to the Colts. ■

WEEK 4

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, October 2

@ Atlanta 30 ..... Minnesota 10
@ Baltimore 13 ..... N.Y. Jets 3
@ Cincinnati 16 ..... Houston 10
Denver 20 ..... @ Jacksonville 7
Indianapolis 31 ..... @ Tennessee 10
@ New Orleans 19 ..... Buffalo 7**
@ N.Y. Giants 44 ..... St. Louis 24
@ Oakland 19 ..... Dallas 13
Philadelphia 37 ..... @ Kansas City 31
San Diego 41 ..... @ New England 17
@ Tampa Bay 17 ..... Detroit 13
@ Washington 20 ..... Seattle 17 (OT)
@ Arizona 31 ..... San Francisco 14*

Monday, October 3

@ Carolina 32 ..... Green Bay 29

Open Dates: Chicago, Cleveland, Miami, Pittsburgh

*Played in Mexico City
**Played in San Antonio

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Drew Brees (QB, Chargers) – Posted a 137.5 passer rating by completing 19 of 24 passes for 248 yards with two TDs in win at New England.

AFC Defensive Player

Al Wilson (LB, Broncos) – Had six tackles, including a sack, and forced two fumbles in win at Jacksonville.

AFC Special Teams Player

Sebastian Janikowski (K, Raiders) – Made all four of his field goal attempts in victory over Dallas.

NFC Offensive Player

Plaxico Burress (WR, Giants) – Made career-high 10 catches for 204 yards, including two TDs, to defeat St. Louis.

NFC Defensive Player

Darren Howard (DE, Saints) – Three tackles, two sacks, and one forced fumble as part of a defense that limited Buffalo to 67 passing yards.

NFC Special Teams Player

Neil Rackers (K, Cardinals) – Kicked six field goals, four from 40 yards or longer, to help defeat San Francisco.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Domonique Foxworth (CB, Broncos) – Six tackles and had an interception that led to a FG in win at Jacksonville.

WEEK 5: AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

FIERCE ROAD CHALLENGES AWAITED ALL FOUR OF THE LEAGUE'S UNDEFEATED TEAMS IN WEEK FIVE. AND BY THE TIME THE WEEK WAS COMPLETE, ONLY ONE RETURNED HOME WITH ITS PERFECT RECORD STILL INTACT.

▲ BIG BEN, AGAIN. The Steelers quarterback ran for a TD and threw for another in directing a win at San Diego.

With its vastly improved defense once again setting the tone, *Indianapolis dominated San Francisco, 28-3, for its fifth straight win. The Colts forced five turnovers, highlighted by Cato June's 24-yard interception return for a touchdown, and kept an opponent out of the end zone for the third time on the year. Offensively, Edgerrin James rushed for 105 yards and scored on a four-yard run, while Peyton Manning completed 23 of 31 passes for 255 yards and a TD.*

Yet the league's other unbeatens weren't as fortunate. Cincinnati was stopped by Jacksonville behind two Byron Leftwich touchdown throws and three Josh Scobee field goals, including two from more than 50 yards. Washington's bid to stay perfect was swatted away by the Broncos, 21-19, while Tampa Bay was sent to defeat by the Jets in Vinny Testaverde's return to New York.

Week Five also featured Dallas' impressive triumph over defending NFC champion and division rival Philadelphia, and was capped with a Monday Night thriller won by the Steelers over the Chargers, 24-22, on Jeff Reed's 40-yard field goal in the final seconds.

Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

◀ **STAR POWER. Terry Glenn caught a pair of first-quarter touchdown passes from Drew Bledsoe, sparking Dallas to a key division victory over the Eagles.**

FOURTH-QUARTER FIREWORKS

Cleveland and Carolina were among those posting late rallies in Week Five, while the Patriots recovered after surrendering a 15-point fourth-quarter lead. The tandem of Trent Dilfer and Antonio Bryant connected for two touchdown passes in a span of 38 seconds of the Browns' game against Chicago, allowing for a 20-10 win. In Arizona, the Panthers' Jake Delhomme threw his second of two scoring strikes to Steve Smith with 6:54 to go, completing a 24-20 comeback against the Cardinals. The go-ahead drive covered 94 yards and Marlon McCree then preserved the outcome with an end zone interception, his second of the game. New England, meanwhile, allowed host Atlanta to battle back from a 28-13 deficit, before winning on Adam Vinatieri's 29-yard field goal, the 19th game-winning kick of his career. "We came into a tough environment against an excellent team and had a chance to win the game with three minutes left," said Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, who threw for 350 yards and three touchdowns. "I would take that any day."

WEEK 5 STANDINGS

AFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England	3-2-0	118	136
Miami	2-2-0	82	71
Buffalo	2-3-0	68	83
N.Y. Jets	2-3-0	61	85
AFC North	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Cincinnati	4-1-0	124	61
Pittsburgh	3-1-0	105	59
Cleveland	2-2-0	65	74
Baltimore	1-3-0	47	87

AFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Indianapolis	5-0-0	106	29
Jacksonville	3-2-0	85	84
Tennessee	2-3-0	103	126
Houston	0-4-0	44	99
AFC West	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Denver	4-1-0	101	87
Kansas City	2-2-0	91	91
San Diego	2-3-0	149	112
Oakland	1-3-0	76	89

NFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	3-1-0	136	98
Washington	3-1-0	62	58
Dallas	3-2-0	121	98
Philadelphia	3-2-0	122	101
NFC North	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Detroit	2-2-0	71	75
Chicago	1-3-0	62	59
Minnesota	1-3-0	64	107
Green Bay	1-4-0	124	95

NFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	4-1-0	89	59
Atlanta	3-2-0	114	88
Carolina	3-2-0	127	116
New Orleans	2-3-0	71	139
NFC West	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Seattle	3-2-0	126	107
St. Louis	2-3-0	128	148
Arizona	1-4-0	94	134
San Francisco	1-4-0	79	160

Chad Rachman/AP WWP

▲ SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES. Jets head coach Herman Edwards congratulates Vinny Testaverde after a third-quarter TD.

Paul Sancya/AP WWP

▲ BLY-LIEVE IT OR NOT. Lions cornerback Dré Bly had two interceptions and a fumble recovery to help beat Baltimore.

Gene Lower/Wirelmage.com

▲ VICTORY IN HIS CLUTCHES. Carolina's Steve Smith leaps to make the game-winning touchdown catch at Arizona.

When Duty Calls

Two weeks after watching from his home as Jets quarterbacks Chad Pennington and Jay Fiedler were injured in an overtime loss to the Jaguars, Vinny Testaverde was back behind center for the team he had played with for six years. And he guided them to a much-needed 14-12 win over visiting Tampa Bay by completing 13 of 19 passes for 163 yards. Curtis Martin pitched in with a pair of rushing touchdowns, including a one-yarder in the third quarter that moved the hosts ahead for good, and the Jets' defense limited the Bucs to four field goals. "My goal was to get the guys to believe in me, so we can get the season turned around," said the 41-year-old QB, who suited up for New York from 1998-2003. "I think they believe in me. I believe in them." The Jets improved to 2-3 in an AFC East race where the four teams were separated by just one game in the standings.

High Fives

After falling to St. Louis three times during the 2004 season—the last of those defeats coming at home in the Wild Card playoffs—Seattle knocked off the Rams to take over first place in the NFC West. Joe Jurevicius caught a career-high nine passes and Shaun Alexander rushed for a pair of TDs in the Seahawks' 37-31 victory…Dallas led 17-0 before allowing a first down and held the Eagles—who had entered the game with the league's top-ranked offense—to 129 total yards…Brett Favre threw three touchdown passes and Green Bay ran up its highest point total in 22 years in a 52-3 win over the Saints… Kevin Jones scored on runs of 14 yards and one yard and Detroit never trailed while grabbing a 35-17 decision from the Ravens…Steve McNair had quite a day against the Texans: he topped 25,000 career passing yards, threw for two touchdowns, and ran for another score in Tennessee's 34-20 triumph. ■

WEEK 5

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, October 9

@ Buffalo 20	Miami 14
Carolina 24	@ Arizona 20
@ Cleveland 20	Chicago 10
@ Dallas 33	Philadelphia 10
@ Denver 21	Washington 19
@ Detroit 35	Baltimore 17
@ Green Bay 52	New Orleans 3
Indianapolis 28	@ San Francisco 3
New England 31	@ Atlanta 28
@ N.Y. Jets 14	Tampa Bay 12
Seattle 37	@ St. Louis 31
Tennessee 34	@ Houston 20
@ Jacksonville 23	Cincinnati 20

Monday, October 10

Pittsburgh 24	@ San Diego 22

Open Dates: Kansas City, Minnesota, N.Y. Giants, Oakland

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Tom Brady (QB, Patriots) – Completed 22 of 27 passes for 350 yards and three touchdowns, while posting a 140.4 passer rating, to beat Atlanta.

AFC Defensive Player

Dewayne Robertson (DT, Jets) – Nine tackles and two sacks to help Jets hand Tampa Bay its first loss of year.

AFC Special Teams Player

Josh Scobee (K, Jaguars) – Made all three of his field goal attempts (32, 51, and 53 yards) in win over Bengals.

NFC Offensive Player

Matt Hasselbeck (QB, Seahawks) – Completed 27 of 38 passes for 316 yards and two TDs as Seattle won in St. Louis for first time since 1997.

NFC Defensive Player

Al Harris (CB, Packers) – Intercepted two passes, one he returned 22 yards for a TD, defensed three passes, and added a sack in win over Saints.

NFC Special Teams Player

R.W. McQuarters (PR, Lions) – Had four punt returns for 75 yards, setting up two TDs in victory over Ravens.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Tyson Thompson (RB, Cowboys) – Rushed for 75 yards on 20 carries and averaged 29.0 yards on three kickoff returns in win over Eagles.

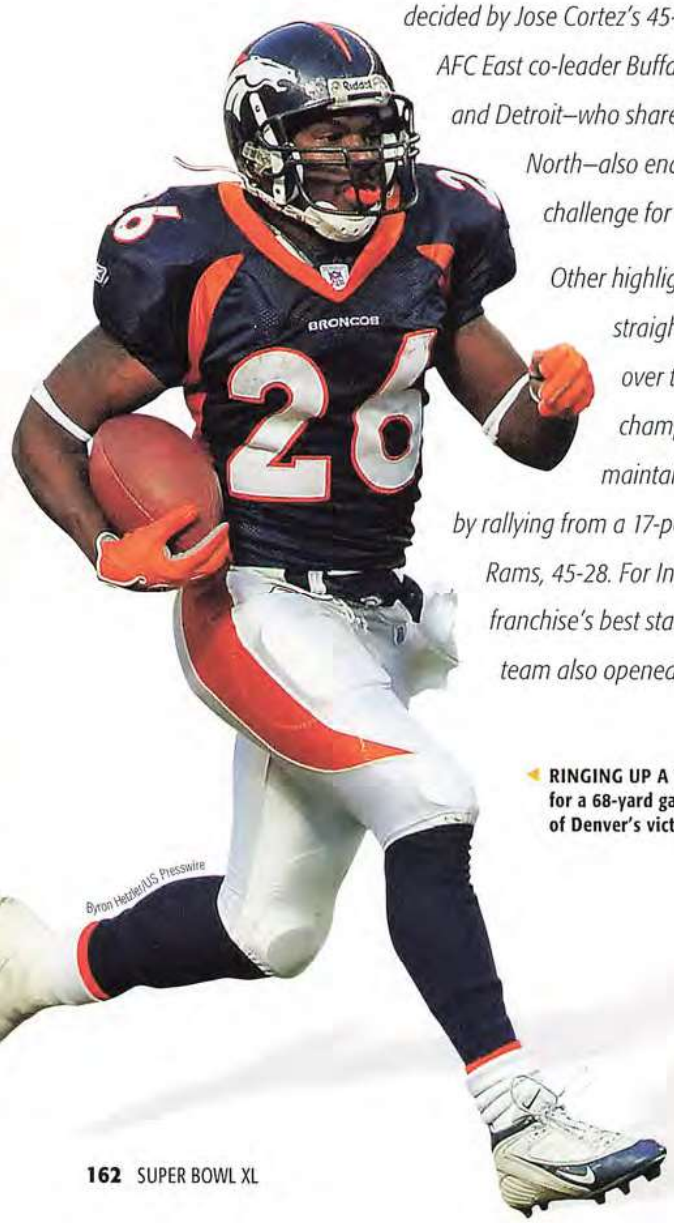
WEEK 6: A WILD WEEK SHAKES THINGS UP

IT WAS ANOTHER WILD WEEK IN THE NFL: THIS ONE FEATURED A PAIR OF OVERTIME GAMES, NINE TOUCHDOWNS BY DEFENSES AND SPECIAL TEAMS, AND SEVERAL RECORDS SET. FOR CERTAIN, 2005 WAS SHAPING UP AS A SEASON LIKE NO OTHER.

The biggest changes were taking place at the top, *with five divisions being led by teams that didn't qualify for the previous year's playoffs. Among that group was Tampa Bay, which improved to 5-1 and equaled its 2004 win total by storming past in-state rival Miami. The Buccaneers broke open a close game with 17 third-quarter points, capped by Will Allen's 33-yard fumble return for a touchdown, and stayed one game ahead of Atlanta and Carolina in the competitive NFC South.*

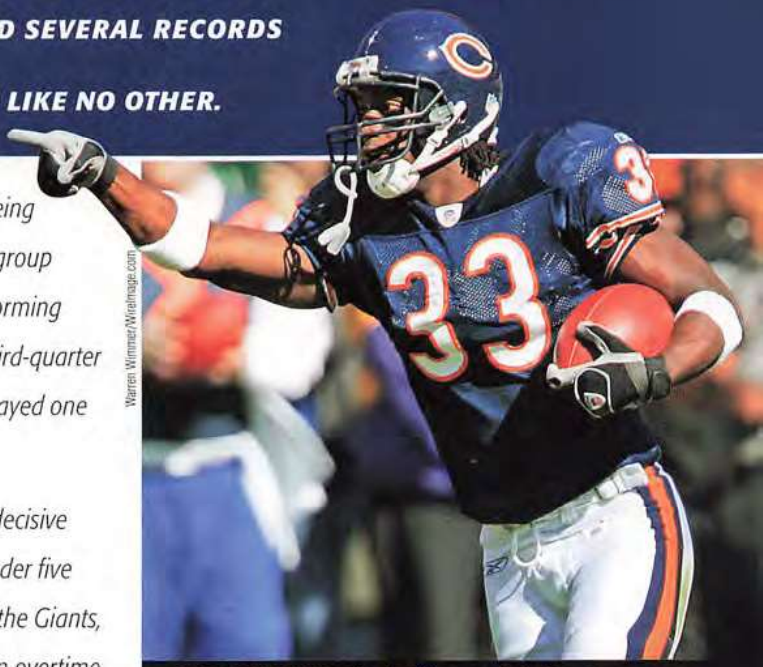
AFC North leader Cincinnati also moved to 5-1 by defeating Tennessee, the decisive points coming on Carson Palmer's 15-yard TD pass to Chad Johnson with under five minutes to play. Dallas climbed atop the NFC East with its 16-13 win against the Giants, decided by Jose Cortez's 45-yard field goal in overtime. AFC East co-leader Buffalo, along with Chicago and Detroit—who shared the top spot in the NFC North—also ended the week positioned to challenge for division crowns.

Other highlights included Denver's fifth straight win, a 28-20 triumph over the defending Super Bowl champion Patriots, and the Colts maintaining their perfect record by rallying from a 17-point deficit to beat the Rams, 45-28. For Indianapolis, it marked the franchise's best start since the 1958 NFL title team also opened the year 6-0.



Byron Hetzler/US Presswire

◀ **RINGING UP A WIN. Tatum Bell races for a 68-yard gain in the second quarter of Denver's victory over New England.**



Warren Winmer/Wirelmage.com

▲ **STOP RIGHT THERE. Charles Tillman and the Bears' defense stymied Minnesota in a 28-3 win at Soldier Field.**

RUNNING WILD

Without question, the top two running backs in the early part of the season were the Seahawks' Shaun Alexander and the Chargers' LaDainian Tomlinson. In Week Six, Alexander gained 141 yards and had his second four-TD game of the year in a romp over the Texans that pushed Seattle's NFC West lead to two games. "This team is finally getting to where it should be," said Alexander, who crossed the goal line on runs of 4, 5, 1, and 23 yards. "We're mature. We handle our business." While both Alexander and Tomlinson entered the record book by becoming the first NFL players to rush for at least 10 touchdowns in five straight years, the San Diego back did even more. He also threw and caught TD passes in the 27-14 victory at Oakland. Shortly after his 35-yard reception gave the Chargers a 7-0 lead (and tied a league mark by scoring in his 18th straight game), Tomlinson's 7-yard TD run made it 14-0. Then, in the second quarter, he tossed a 4-yard touchdown to Justin Peelle to become the first player in the league to accomplish a TD trifecta in the same game since New England's David Patten in 2001.

"In the celebration in the end zone I said, 'Superman, you can do it all.'"

—Chargers QB Drew Brees, after LaDainian Tomlinson threw, caught, and ran for touchdowns in the first half of a win over the Raiders.

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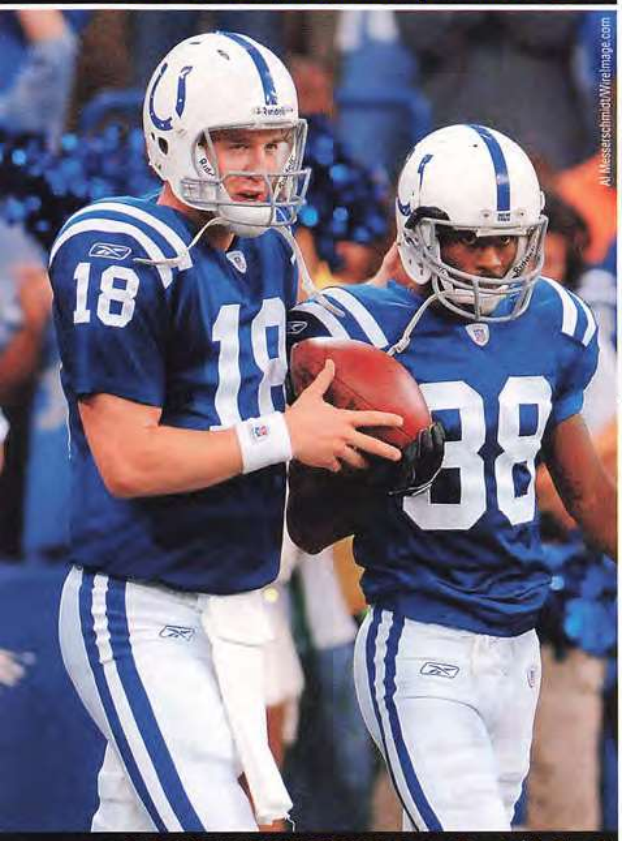
Tim Heitman/US Presswire

▲ ON POINT. With an overtime victory against the Giants, Bill Parcells' Cowboys took over first place in the NFC East.



Al Messerschmidt/WireImage.com

▲ COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU. Peyton Manning (left) and Marvin Harrison celebrate their record-breaking TD pass.

Carleton Hall/WireImage.com

▲ THAT'S THE WAY, RAY. The Ravens' linebacker had a fumble recovery and an interception in a 16-3 win over Cleveland.

The Consummate Combination

Peyton Manning and Marvin Harrison continued to rewrite the NFL record book while also pushing Indianapolis to front-runner status on the road to Super Bowl XL. Already holding league marks for most completions and most passing yards by a QB-wide receiver combination, the duo added the record for touchdowns by connecting on a fade route for a 6-yard score in the Colts' win over the Rams. It was the 86th time they had worked in tandem for a TD, surpassing the standard set by San Francisco's Steve Young and Jerry Rice. "It was appropriate it ended that way," said Manning. "The great catch over the shoulder, dragging his feet. He's done it so many times." While Indy's defense allowed 28 points—just one less than it had yielded in the season's first five games—it still played a big role in the win. Both of Cato June's interceptions led to touchdowns, and Nick Harper contributed an interception and a fumble recovery that the Colts turned into points.

Week Six Shots

It wasn't just the offenses scoring the points in Week Six: nine TDs came as a result of defense/special teams. Four were on interception returns, and none bigger than Rashean Mathis' 41-yarder in overtime that lifted the Jaguars over Pittsburgh. "They ran the same route on the same formation before, so I knew what I was getting," said Mathis, after Jacksonville improved to 4-2…The Falcons scored on a 66-yard fumble return by DeAngelo Hall and a 59-yard return of a blocked field goal by Demorrio Williams to spark their 34-31 win over the Saints. Carolina, meanwhile, gave up two touchdowns on interception returns, but recovered to beat the Lions, 21-20, when Ricky Proehl grabbed a 3-yard TD from Chris Weinke with 32 seconds to go…The Bengals' Carson Palmer (27 of 33, 272 yards) tied an NFL record by posting his ninth straight game with a passer rating of 100 or better…Willis McGahee rushed for 143 yards and Kelly Holcomb threw two TDs as the Bills beat the Jets, 27-17, in an AFC East battle. ■

WEEK 6

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, October 16

Atlanta 34 .....@ New Orleans 31*
@ Baltimore 16.....Cleveland 3
@ Buffalo 27.....N.Y. Jets 17
Carolina 21.....@ Detroit 20
@ Chicago 28.....Minnesota 3
Cincinnati 31 .....@ Tennessee 23
@ Dallas 16.....N.Y. Giants 13 (OT)
@ Denver 28.....New England 20
Jacksonville 23..@ Pittsburgh 17 (OT)
@ Kansas City 28 .....Washington 21
San Diego 27 .....@ Oakland 14
@ Tampa Bay 27 .....Miami 13
@ Seattle 42.....Houston 10

Monday, October 17

@ Indianapolis 45 .....St. Louis 28

Open Dates: Arizona, Green Bay, Philadelphia, San Francisco

**Played in San Antonio*

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

LaDainian Tomlinson (RB, Chargers) – Became fifth NFL player since 1967 to run, throw, and catch a TD in a game as Chargers beat Oakland.

AFC Defensive Player

Jared Allen (DE, Chiefs) – Three sacks, two forced fumbles, and six tackles in victory over Washington.

AFC Special Teams Player

Todd Sauerbrun (P, Broncos) – Had a 52.3-yard average on seven punts (46.9 yards net) in win over Patriots.

NFC Offensive Player

Shaun Alexander (RB, Seahawks) – Rushed for 141 yards, scored four TDs, and helped Seattle to a club-record 320 rushing yards in win over Texans.

NFC Defensive Player

Anthony Henry (CB, Cowboys) – Seven tackles, four passes defensed, one interception, and forced a fumble in OT triumph against Giants.

NFC Special Teams Player

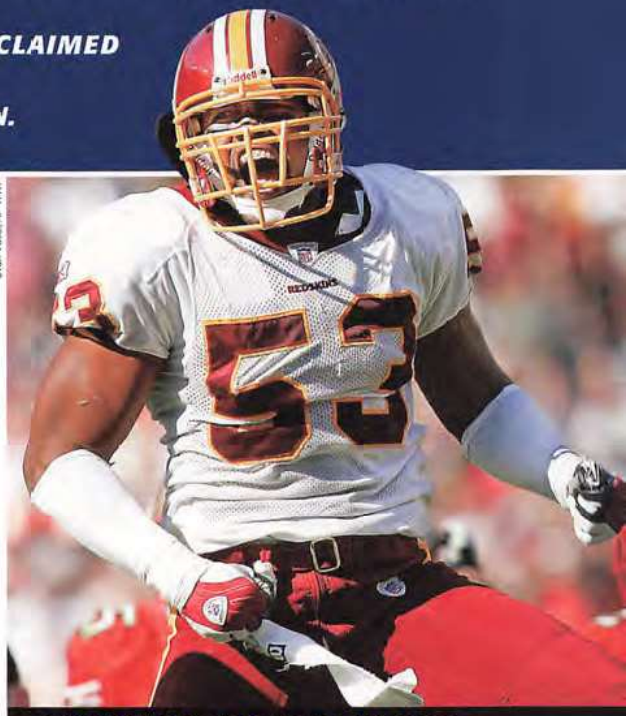
Josh Bidwell (P, Buccaneers) – Had a 48.9-yard average, with five punts inside the 20, to help beat Miami.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Odell Thurman (LB, Bengals) – Made four tackles and had an interception return for a TD in win over Titans.

WEEK 7: HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

NO MATTER WHERE YOU LOOKED, EXCITEMENT COULD BE FOUND DURING THE SEASON'S SEVENTH WEEK. MARQUEE MATCHUPS FILLED THE BILL AND FIVE TEAMS CLAIMED VICTORY BY STAGING LATE RALLIES, SOME IN STIRRING FASHION.



Evan Vucci/AP WWP

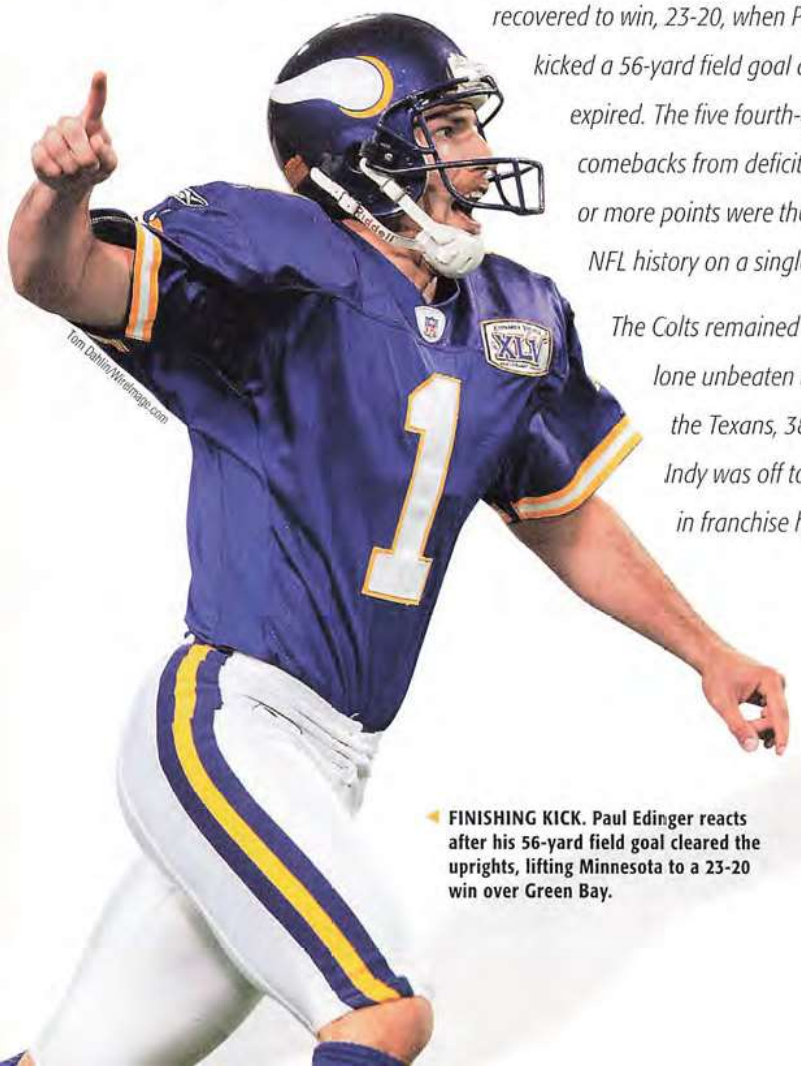
▲ **HE'S GOT NAME. Sparked by the play of linebacker Marcus Washington, the Redskins won their fourth game.**

The weekend's drama was best captured in the showdown *between the Giants and the AFC West-leading Broncos. With his team trailing by 13 points, Eli Manning directed a pair of fourth-quarter scoring drives, the second capped by Amani Toomer's TD catch with five seconds to play that lifted New York to a 24-23 triumph and a share of the NFC East lead.*

Division rival Philadelphia also was victorious when Matt Ware returned a blocked field goal attempt 65 yards for a touchdown that provided for a 20-17 decision over the Chargers. Dallas, however, was on the other side of the dramatics, as Seattle scored 10 points in the game's final 40 seconds to stun the Cowboys, 13-10.

St. Louis trailed the Saints, 17-7, in the fourth quarter before erupting for three TDs in an eight-minute span, the go-ahead score coming on Kevin Curtis' five-yard reverse. And the Vikings, after finding themselves in a 17-point halftime hole to the Packers, recovered to win, 23-20, when Paul Edinger kicked a 56-yard field goal as time expired. The five fourth-quarter comebacks from deficits of seven or more points were the most in NFL history on a single day.

The Colts remained the league's lone unbeaten team, topping the Texans, 38-20. At 7-0, Indy was off to its best start in franchise history.



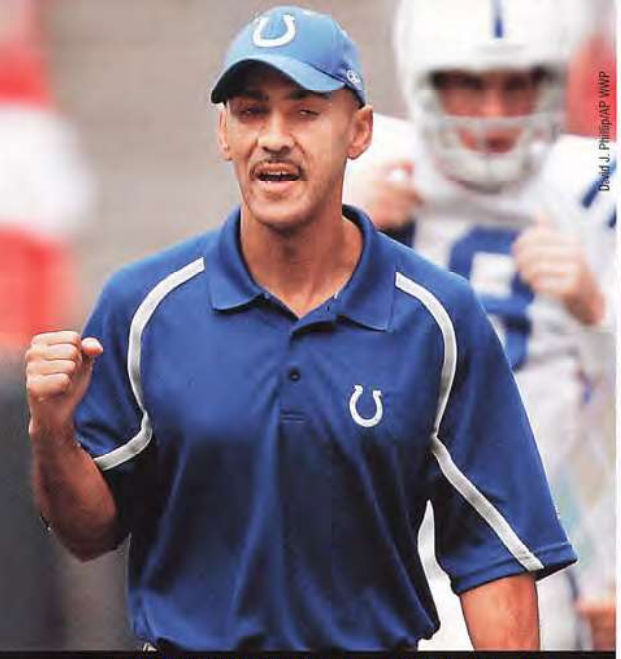
Tom Dahlin/WireImage.com

◀ **FINISHING KICK. Paul Edinger reacts after his 56-yard field goal cleared the uprights, lifting Minnesota to a 23-20 win over Green Bay.**

BEASTS THROUGHOUT THE EAST

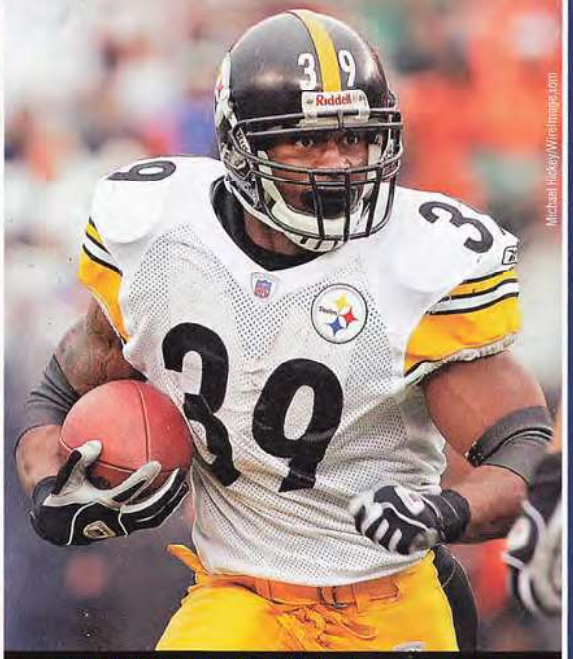
Not since 1935 had an entire NFL division finished with winning records, but the NFC East was trying to change that. Its four teams were a combined seven games above .500 with the Giants, Redskins, and Eagles all sharing the division lead at 4-2, and the Cowboys (4-3) lurking a half-game behind. While its division compatriots were locked in down-to-the-wire battles in Week Seven, Washington was having an easier time of it. The Redskins rolled up their highest point total in 14 years, beating San Francisco, 52-17, for head coach Joe Gibbs' 150th win. "We are a Rocky Balboa-type team, but it's good to get a young Mike Tyson-type win and knock someone out," said LB Marcus Washington, who had four tackles, a sack, and a forced fumble. Clinton Portis rushed for 101 yards and scored three times as the Redskins enjoyed their first game of the year decided by more than a TD. The last time every team in a division finished with at least a .500 record was 2002, when it was done in the AFC East and AFC West.

"I took off running after it, like I was going to catch it or something."
— Vikings kicker Paul Edinger on his game-winning field goal against the Packers.



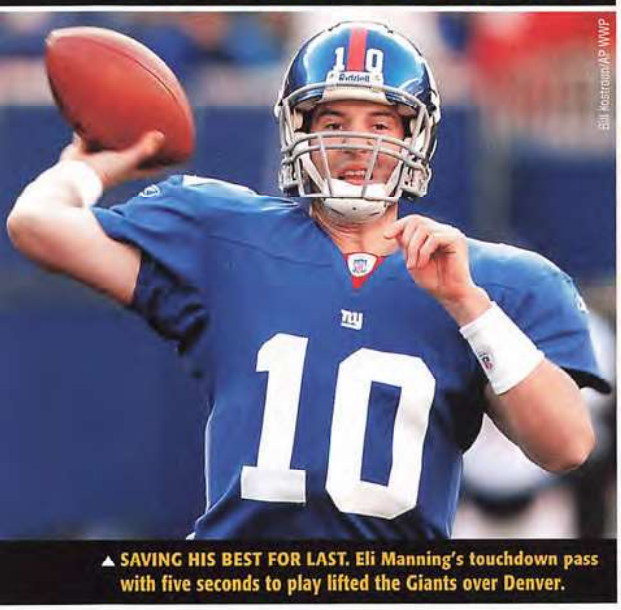
David J. Phillip/AP WWP

▲ THE CENTURY MARK. Tony Dungy's 100th victory as a head coach also kept the Colts undefeated on the season.



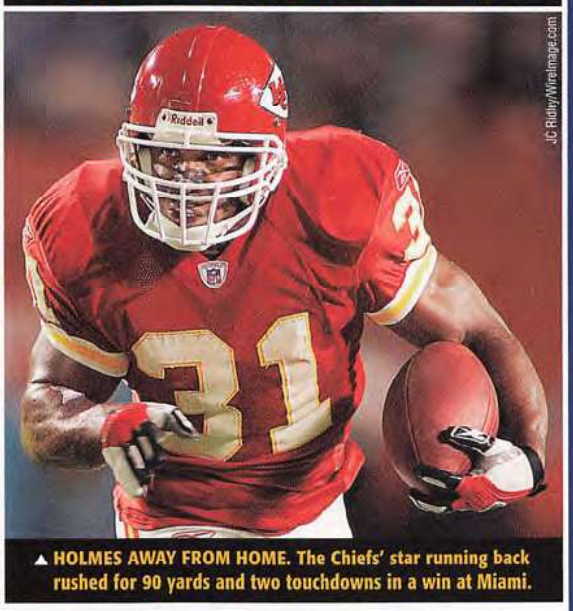
Michael Hickey/WireImage.com

▲ OPEN FIELD, CLOSE RACE. Willie Parker and the Steelers ran past Cincinnati, tightening the AFC North standings.



Bill Kostroun/AP WWP

▲ SAVING HIS BEST FOR LAST. Eli Manning's touchdown pass with five seconds to play lifted the Giants over Denver.



JC Ridley/WireImage.com

▲ HOLMES AWAY FROM HOME. The Chiefs' star running back rushed for 90 yards and two touchdowns in a win at Miami.

Still The Men Of Steel

Defending AFC North champ Pittsburgh reasserted itself as the team to beat in that division with a 27-13 triumph at Cincinnati that pulled the Steelers within a game of the division-leading Bengals. In the process, they won their 10th straight road game as a Paul Brown Stadium-record 66,104 fans looked on. "You have to understand that we're the champions until proven otherwise," said linebacker Joey Porter. Leading 7-6, at the half, Pittsburgh took control in the third quarter with Willie Parker's 37-yard TD run and Ben Roethlisberger's 4-yard scoring toss to Hines Ward, plays that were sandwiched around a pair of Jeff Reed field goals. Parker finished with 131 rushing yards. Defensively, the Steelers held the Bengals' Rudi Johnson to 65 yards, their 18th straight game without allowing a 100-yard rusher, and twice picked off Carson Palmer. It was the first time in 10 games that Palmer's passer rating was below 100.

The Best Of (Week) Seven

The Dolphins-Chiefs game in Miami was moved to Friday night because of approaching Hurricane Wilma. Trent Green threw for 289 yards and Priest Holmes ran for two TDs in Kansas City's 30-20 win…Atlanta, the league's top rushing team, gained 205 yards on the ground in beating the Jets, 27-14. Warrick Dunn ran for 155 of that total, the most by any back in Week Seven…Jeff Garcia, making his first start for the Lions, threw for 210 yards and ran for a TD in a win at Cleveland that kept Detroit tied atop the NFC North. They shared that spot with the Bears, who edged the Ravens, 10-6, behind Thomas Jones' 139 rushing yards…The Eagles halted LaDainian Tomlinson's streak of consecutive games with a TD at 18, leaving him tied with Lenny Moore for the NFL mark…The NFC, looking to win the head-to-head battle with the AFC for the first time since 1995, went 6-0 in interconference games. ■

WEEK 7

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Friday, October 21

Kansas City 30 ..... @ Miami 20

Sunday, October 23

@ Arizona 20 ..... Tennessee 10
@ Chicago 10 ..... Baltimore 6
Detroit 13 ..... @ Cleveland 10
Indianapolis 38 ..... @ Houston 20
@ Minnesota 23 ..... Green Bay 20
@ N.Y. Giants 24 ..... Denver 23
@ Oakland 38 ..... Buffalo 17
@ Philadelphia 20 ..... San Diego 17
Pittsburgh 27 ..... @ Cincinnati 13
@ St. Louis 28 ..... New Orleans 17
@ Seattle 13 ..... Dallas 10
@ Washington 52 ..... San Francisco 17

Monday, October 24

@ Atlanta 27 ..... N.Y. Jets 14

Open Dates: Carolina, Jacksonville, New England, Tampa Bay

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

LaMont Jordan (RB, Raiders) – Tied a team record with three rushing TDs and ran for 122 yards in win over Bills.

AFC Defensive Player

Robert Mathis (DE, Colts) – Four tackles, one sack, and forced a fumble that was returned for a touchdown in victory at Houston.

AFC Special Teams Player

Lawrence Tynes (K, Chiefs) – Perfect on three field goal attempts (30, 51, and 52 yards) to help beat Miami.

NFC Offensive Player

Daunte Culpepper (QB, Vikings) – Completed 23 of 31 passes for 280 yards, two TDs, and a 123.1 passer rating in rallying for win over Packers.

NFC Defensive Player

Jeremiah Trotter (LB, Eagles) – Had 11 tackles, a sack, an interception, and a forced fumble in win over Chargers.

NFC Special Teams Player

Josh Brown (K, Seahawks) – Converted two 50-yard field goal attempts, including game-winner as time expired, in victory over Dallas.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Kyle Orton (QB, Bears) – Completed 15 of 29 passes for 145 yards and one TD to help beat Baltimore.

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WEEK 8: HIGH-STAKES SHOWDOWNS

FIRST PLACE WAS ON THE LINE IN THREE DIVISION SHOWDOWNS AS RACES IN BOTH CONFERENCES CONTINUED TO HEAT UP. EACH CONTEST PRODUCED A DIFFERENT STORY: A ROUT, AN OVERTIME THRILLER, AND A FOURTH-QUARTER RALLY.

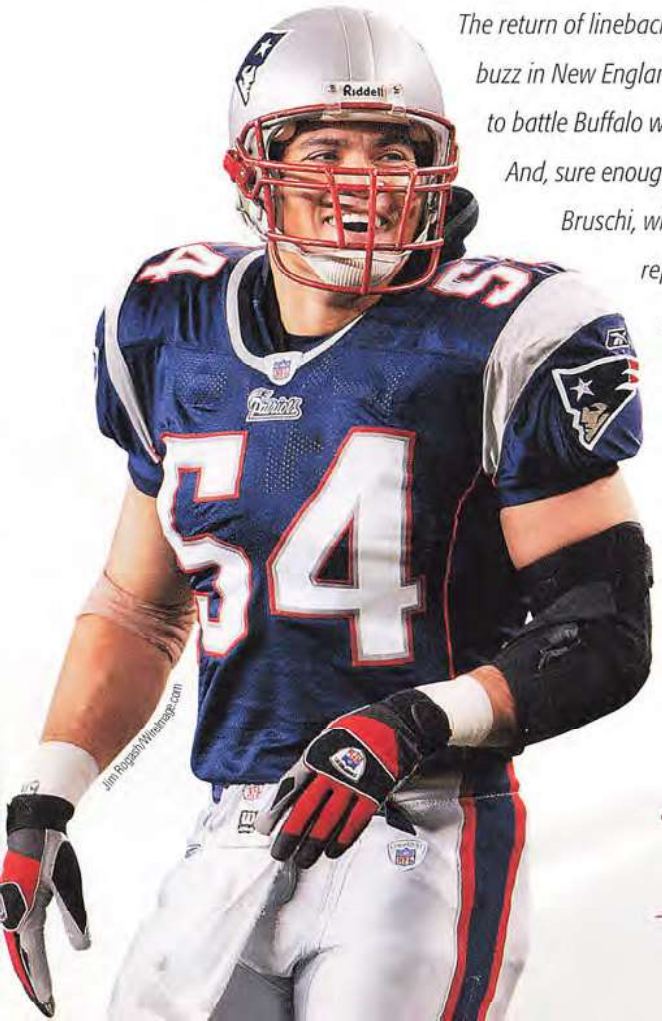
James R. Morton/Wirelmage.com

Fans at the Meadowlands paid tribute *to Wellington Mara, the Giants' longtime owner who passed away earlier in the week, prior to the team's game against Washington. New York then went out and beat the Redskins, 36-0, to improve to 5-2 and take sole possession of first place in the NFC East. Tiki Barber rushed for 206 yards, Jay Feely kicked five field goals, and the Giants' defense gave up just 125 total yards while posting the league's first shutout of 2005.*

Evan Pinkus/Wirelmage.com

▲ **BARBER SHEARS THE SKINS. The Giants' standout became the first back of 2005 to rush for 200 yards in a game.**

Sixty minutes of football wasn't enough to determine a winner at Ford Field, so the Bears and Lions advanced to an extra session. That's when Chicago's Charles Tillman stepped in front of a Jeff Garcia pass and returned it 22 yards for a touchdown that gave the Bears a 19-13 win and first place in the NFC North. With the triumph, Chicago also became the first NFL franchise to reach 650 victories.



Jim Rogash/Wirelmage.com

The return of linebacker Tedy Bruschi created quite a buzz in New England, where the Patriots were set to battle Buffalo with the AFC East lead at stake. And, sure enough, one comeback led to another. Bruschi, who in February had surgery to repair a small hole in his heart, made 10 tackles in his season debut while the Patriots got a pair of fourth-quarter TD runs from Corey Dillon as they rallied for a 21-16 win.

◀ **A SPECIAL BREW. The return of Tedy Bruschi to the Patriots' defensive mix was one reason his team beat Buffalo.**

BRONCOS BUST OUT

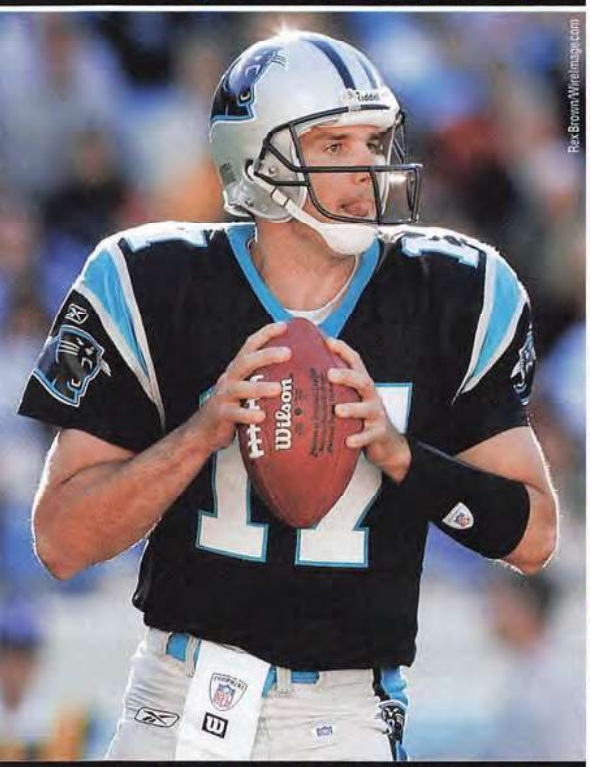
Denver improved to 6-2 and kept atop the AFC West by overpowering the Eagles, 49-21, giving the Broncos wins over both of the previous year's Super Bowl participants. Yet this was as peculiar a 28-point win as one would ever find. After jumping out to a 28-0 lead—thanks in part to three Jake Plummer touchdown passes—the Broncos suddenly found themselves in a battle. Philly had pulled within seven points and was on the move again early in the fourth quarter before Domonique Foxworth picked off a Donovan McNabb pass in the end zone. "That's the play of the game," said Denver safety John Lynch, who added an interception of his own. Plummer then found Todd Devoe for a 43-yard scoring strike and Tatum Bell followed with a pair of TD runs that accounted for the final margin. Mike Anderson led the Broncos with 126 rushing yards and tallied the game's first touchdown, while Bell totaled 107 yards on the ground. "Mike is a hard-nosed runner," said Bell. "He loosens them up, and I come in there and find a crease and take it to the house."

"The ball was floating. But my eyes weren't big until I caught it and knew I would score."

— Bears cornerback Charles Tillman on his overtime interception that beat the Lions.

Jack Dempsey/AP Wire

▲ MILE-HIGH MENTOR. Head coach Mike Shanahan reacts to a call during the Broncos' 49-21 victory over the Eagles.



Rex Brown/Wirelmage.com

▲ DELHOMME DELIVERY. The Panthers' QB threw for three touchdowns as Carolina pulled into a tie atop the NFC South.

Stan Liu/US Presswire

▲ VICTORY GAIT. Antonio Gates heads to the end zone with the last of his three TD receptions in the Chargers' win.

Stalemate In The South

The NFC South was shaping up to be quite a race with Atlanta, Carolina, and Tampa Bay—teams that had either reached the Super Bowl or the NFC title game in each of the previous three years—all locked together at 5-2. With the Falcons enjoying their bye week, the Panthers won their fourth straight game and moved into a first-place tie by winning, 38-13, over the Vikings. Steve Smith set a franchise record with 201 receiving yards and caught a 24-yard TD from Jake Delhomme that made it 24-0 just before halftime. "We have a saying around here, 'If you're not getting better, you're getting worse,'" said Carolina head coach John Fox. "Hopefully, we can just keep plodding along and continuing to improve." The Buccaneers, meanwhile, were tripped up at San Francisco, 15-10. The 49ers' Joe Nedney kicked five field goals, the final one coming after Tampa Bay had closed the gap to two points on Chris Simms' 78-yard touchdown pass to Joey Galloway.

Week Eight Greats

Cincinnati improved to 6-2 and became the first NFL team since 1970 to intercept five passes in three different games. Deltha O'Neal collected two of those pickoffs in a 21-14 win over Green Bay… Pittsburgh beat the Ravens, 20-19, on Jeff Reed's 37-yard field goal with 1:36 to play, while Houston won for the first time in 2005 when Kris Brown kicked a 40-yard FG with 2:45 left on the clock for a 19-16 victory over Cleveland…LaDainian Tomlinson threw his third touchdown pass of the year as the Chargers beat the Chiefs, 28-20…The Saints played in Baton Rouge (with more than 61,000 fans on hand at LSU's Tiger Stadium), but the Dolphins spoiled their return to Louisiana, 21-6. ■

WEEK 8

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, October 30

@ Carolina 38.....Minnesota 13
Chicago 19.....@ Detroit 13 (OT)
@ Cincinnati 21 ..... Green Bay 14
@ Dallas 34 .....Arizona 13
@ Denver 49.....Philadelphia 21
@ Houston 19.....Cleveland 16
Miami 21.....@ New Orleans 6*
@ N.Y. Giants 36 .....Washington 0
Oakland 34.....@ Tennessee 25
@ San Diego 28.....Kansas City 20
@ San Francisco 15.....Tampa Bay 10
@ St. Louis 24.....Jacksonville 21
@ New England 21.....Buffalo 16

Monday, October 31

@ Pittsburgh 20.....Baltimore 19

Open Dates: Atlanta, Indianapolis, N.Y. Jets, Seattle

**Played in Baton Rouge*

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Jake Plummer (QB, Broncos) – Threw for four TDs and 309 yards and posted his sixth straight game without an interception in triumph over Eagles.

AFC Defensive Player

Tedy Bruschi (LB, Patriots) – Made 10 tackles–six within three yards of the line of scrimmage–in win over Bills.

AFC Special Teams Player

Jerome Mathis (KR, Texans) – Averaged 35.4 yards on five kickoff returns, including 63-yarder to set up game-winning FG against Browns.

NFC Offensive Player

Tiki Barber (RB, Giants) – Had NFL's first 200-yard rushing game of year, gaining 206 yards and scoring a TD in victory over Washington.

NFC Defensive Player

Charles Tillman (CB, Bears) – Made nine tackles, had two pass break-ups, and returned interception 22 yards for game-winning TD against Detroit.

NFC Special Teams Player

Joe Nedney (K, 49ers) – Hit five FGs, four from at least 41 yards, for all his team's points in win over Tampa Bay.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Heath Miller (TE, Steelers) – Caught a pair of touchdown passes–from 4 and 8 yards–in win over Baltimore.

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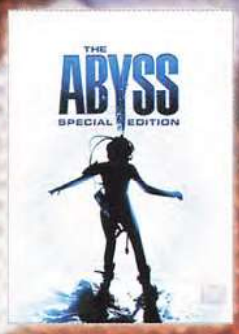
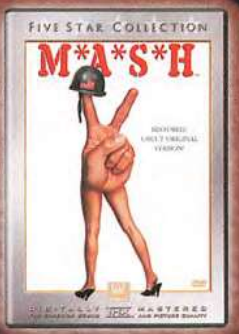
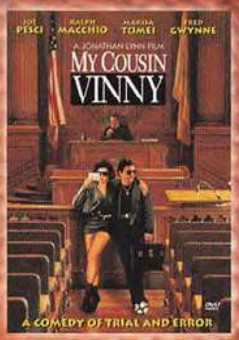
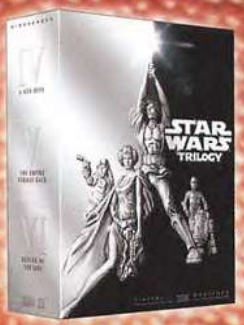
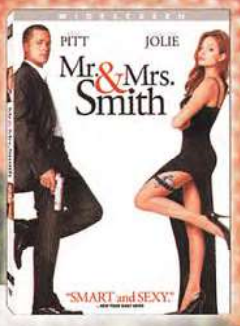


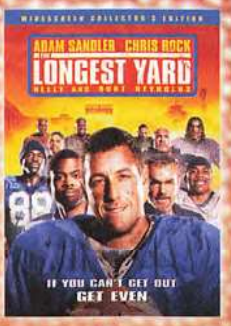


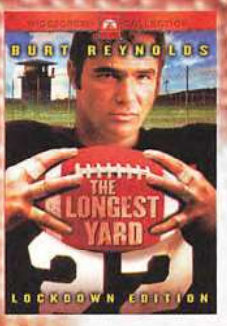


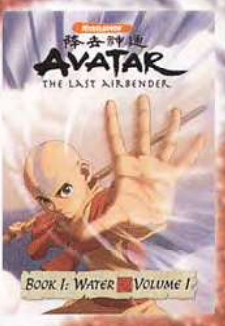
MORE TITLES AT EVERYDAY LOW PRICES











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WEEK 9: COLTS CLEAR HALFWAY HURDLE

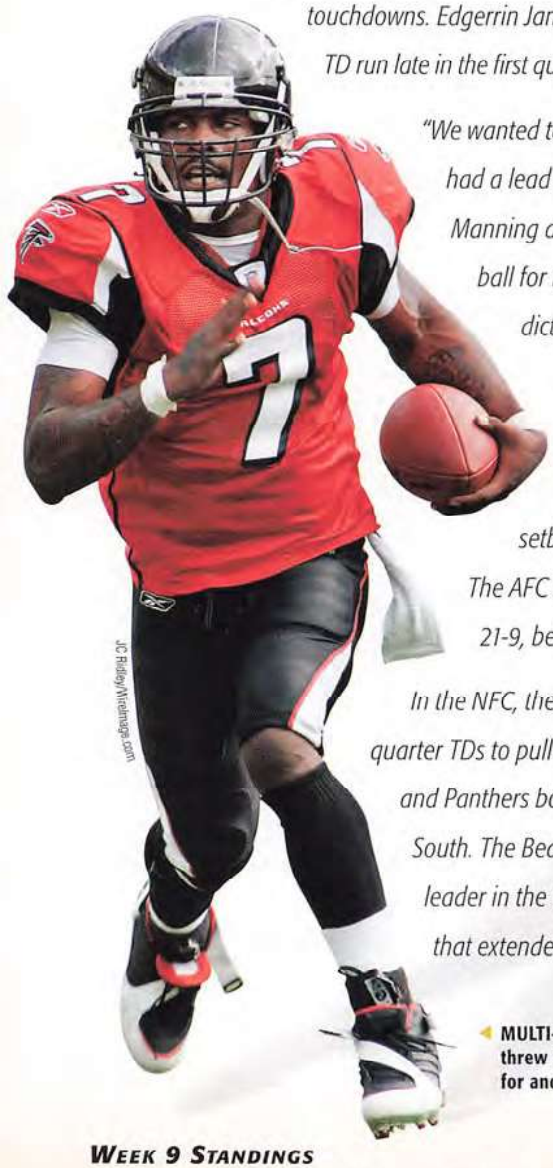
IN ONE OF THOSE RARE NFL WEEKS WHERE MOST GAMES FOLLOWED FORM, THE COLTS REMAINED UNDEFEATED BY WINNING IN NEW ENGLAND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A DECADE. OVERALL, SIX OF THE SEVEN DIVISION LEADERS IN ACTION WERE VICTORIOUS.

***Indianapolis' offense appeared unstoppable at times**, scoring on seven of its first eight possessions in beating the Patriots, 40-21. Peyton Manning completed 28 of 37 passes for 321 yards and connected with favorite target Marvin Harrison for two touchdowns. Edgerrin James rushed for 104 yards and his 2-yard TD run late in the first quarter put the Colts ahead for good.*

"We wanted to execute and get a lead. We haven't had a lead on this team in a long time," said Manning after helping the Indy offense control the ball for nearly 37 minutes. "The idea is to try to dictate to the defense."

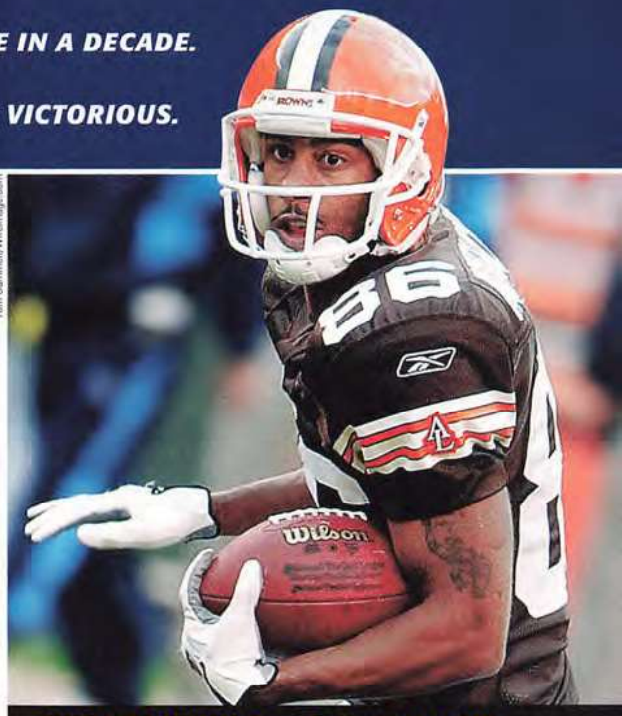
The 8-0 Colts remained comfortably ahead of Jacksonville in the AFC South while the Patriots, despite the setback, stayed on top of the AFC East. The AFC North-leading Bengals beat Baltimore, 21-9, behind Carson Palmer's two TD passes.

In the NFC, the East-leading Giants got two fourth-quarter TDs to pull away from the 49ers, and the Falcons and Panthers both won to remain locked atop the South. The Bears, ahead in the North, and Seattle, the leader in the West, helped their causes with victories that extended their win streaks to four.



JC Ridley/Wirelmage.com

◀ **MULTI-FACETED FALCON. Michael Vick threw for 228 yards and a TD, and ran for another 38 yards, to beat Miami.**



Tom Cammett/Wirelmage.com

▲ **CLEVELAND'S COMPASS. Dennis Northcutt's 58-yard TD catch helped direct the Browns to a win over Tennessee.**

CLUTCH IN KANSAS CITY

Five of the previous six Chiefs-Raiders games in Kansas City had been decided in OT or the final 25 seconds of regulation, and their Week Nine meeting proved no different. After Randy Moss' 7-yard TD catch put Oakland ahead, 23-20, with 1:45 to play, the hosts countered and reached the Raiders' 1-yard line on Trent Green's 36-yard pass to Larry Johnson. It was decision time: just five seconds remained, the Chiefs had no timeouts, and a chip-shot field goal would tie the game. Yet head coach Dick Vermeil decided to go for the win. He was rewarded when Johnson leaped over the line of scrimmage and landed in the end zone as time expired. "Wow! I was scared. I just figured I'm too old to wait," said the 69-year-old Vermeil. "It was not an impulsive thing. It was the right thing to do." Johnson, who had scored earlier on a 15-yard run, finished with 107 yards rushing.

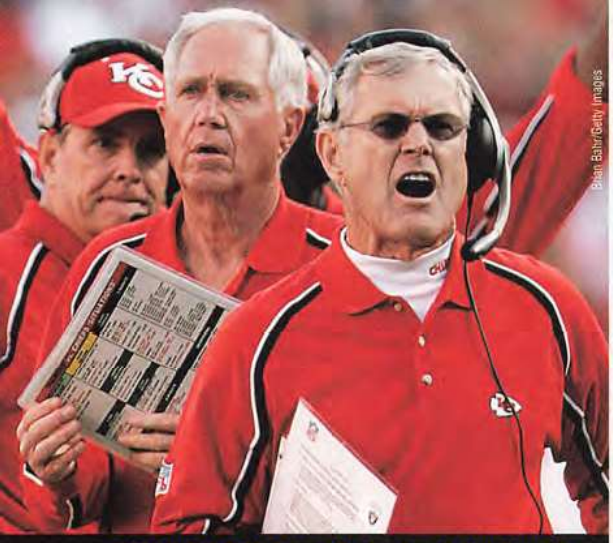
WEEK 9 STANDINGS

AFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England	4-4-0	180	220
Buffalo	3-5-0	128	159
Miami	3-5-0	146	151
N.Y. Jets	2-6-0	118	170
AFC North	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Cincinnati	7-2-0	210	134
Pittsburgh	6-2-0	189	124
Cleveland	3-5-0	114	136
Baltimore	2-6-0	97	141

AFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Indianapolis	8-0-0	229	98
Jacksonville	5-3-0	150	139
Tennessee	2-7-0	175	231
Houston	1-7-0	107	216
AFC West	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Denver	6-2-0	201	152
Kansas City	5-3-0	196	183
San Diego	5-4-0	252	192
Oakland	3-5-0	185	185

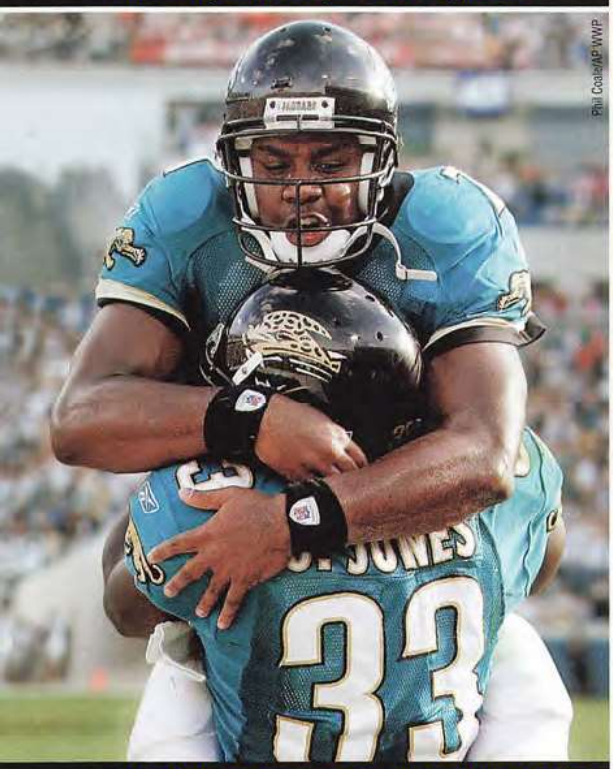
NFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	6-2-0	233	143
Dallas	5-3-0	181	137
Washington	5-3-0	152	149
Philadelphia	4-4-0	173	184
NFC North	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Chicago	5-3-0	139	98
Detroit	3-5-0	131	152
Minnesota	3-5-0	130	207
Green Bay	1-7-0	168	159

NFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Atlanta	6-2-0	192	143
Carolina	6-2-0	220	163
Tampa Bay	5-3-0	140	121
New Orleans	2-7-0	142	242
NFC West	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Seattle	6-2-0	214	146
St. Louis	4-4-0	208	231
Arizona	2-6-0	146	211
San Francisco	2-6-0	117	246



Brian Bahr/Getty Images

▲ MAKING THE CALL. Kansas City head coach Dick Vermeil's decision to go for the win proved to be a good one.



Phil Coale/AP/WWP

▲ HAPPY CATS. Greg Jones (No. 33) celebrates his tie-breaking 12-yard touchdown run with Jaguars QB Byron Leftwich.

David Stluka/Getty Images

▲ TROY TAKES CHARGE. Troy Polamalu had six tackles and an interception return for a touchdown in the Steelers' win.

Stellar Stands

The Chargers' and Redskins' defenses stepped up when it mattered most, helping their teams stay in the thick of division races. San Diego got a career-high four touchdowns from LaDainian Tomlinson, but the host Jets still had a chance after Jonathan Vilma recovered a fumble at the Chargers' 30 with 3:06 remaining. New York then drove to the 4, but failed to get into the end zone as Quentin Jammer knocked down a fourth-down pass, preserving the 31-26 triumph. "It was nice," said Tomlinson. "So many times we've been on the losing end of games like this. I figured one game would have to go our way." An NFC East clash had thrilling moments of its own. Washington held a late 17-10 lead over Philadelphia, thanks to Clinton Portis' 6-yard TD run, but the Eagles drove 78 yards to the Redskins' 7-yard line and threatened to tie the game. It wouldn't happen. On fourth-and-four, Ryan Clark intercepted a pass at the goal line, ensuring Washington its first series win since 2001. QB Mark Brunnell completed 21 of 29 passes for 224 yards in the triumph.

More Week Nine News

Troy Polamalu raced 77 yards with a fumble return for a TD and Tyrone Carter grabbed an interception that set up another score as Pittsburgh beat Green Bay, 20-10, to become the first NFL team in 15 years to win 11 straight road games…In Seattle's win over the Cardinals, Shaun Alexander tied a franchise record with an 88-yard touchdown run on the first play of the second half. He became the fourth player in league history with two TD runs of at least 88 yards…Byron Leftwich threw for one TD and ran for another as Jacksonville rallied past the Texans. Leftwich's 8-yard jaunt tied the game and Greg Jones followed with a 12-yard TD run with 2:53 to play to earn the 21-14 win…Brad Johnson, making his first start of the season, threw a pair of TD strikes and Michael Bennett rushed for 106 yards in the Vikings' 27-14 victory over Detroit…Road teams won nine of the weekend's 14 games. ■

WEEK 9

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, November 6

Atlanta 17 ..... @ Miami 10
Carolina 34 ..... @ Tampa Bay 14
Chicago 20 ..... @ New Orleans 17*
Cincinnati 21 ..... @ Baltimore 9
@ Cleveland 20 ..... Tennessee 14
@ Jacksonville 21 ..... Houston 14
@ Kansas City 27 ..... Oakland 23
@ Minnesota 27 ..... Detroit 14
N.Y. Giants 24 ..... @ San Francisco 6
Pittsburgh 20 ..... @ Green Bay 10
San Diego 31 ..... @ N.Y. Jets 26
Seattle 33 ..... @ Arizona 19
@ Washington 17 ..... Philadelphia 10

Monday, November 7

Indianapolis 40 ..... @ New England 21

Open Dates: Buffalo, Dallas, Denver, St. Louis

**Played in Baton Rouge*

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Peyton Manning (QB, Colts) – Posted a 117.1 passer rating by throwing for 321 yards and three TDs to win at New England for first time in career.

AFC Defensive Player

Brian Simmons (LB, Bengals) – Nine tackles, one sack, and defensed two passes as Cincinnati didn't allow a touchdown in victory at Baltimore.

AFC Special Teams Player

Kyle Richardson (P, Browns) – Five punts for 40.6-yard average, with three inside the 20, in win over Titans.

NFC Offensive Player

Shaun Alexander (RB, Seahawks) – Gained Week Nine-best 173 yards on 23 carries with TD runs of 88 and 14 yards in victory over Cardinals.

NFC Defensive Player

Mike Rucker (DE, Panthers) – Three tackles, two sacks, one forced fumble, and a fumble recovery that led to a touchdown in triumph at Tampa Bay.

NFC Special Teams Player

Robbie Gould (K, Bears) – Kicked two field goals, including 28-yard game-winner, to beat New Orleans.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Reggie Brown (WR, Eagles) – Five catches for 94 yards, with a 56-yarder for first career TD, at Washington.

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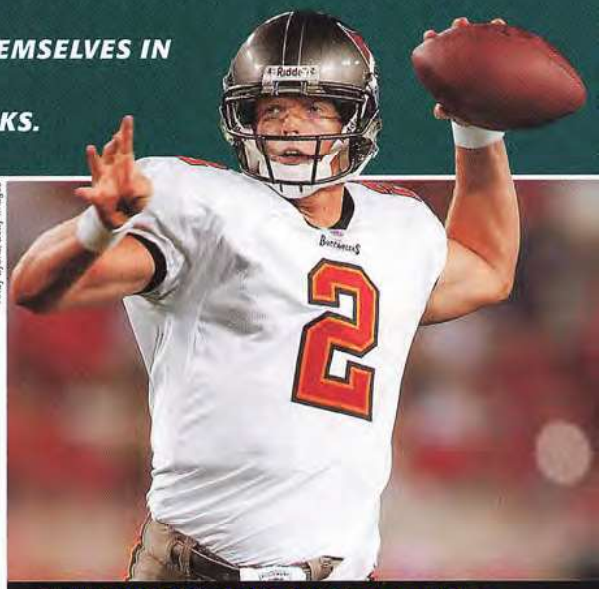
WEEK 10: HISTORY AND HEART-STOPPERS

IT WAS A RECORD-SETTING AND ATTENTION-GETTING WEEKEND AROUND THE NFL. THREE LEAGUE MARKS WERE SHATTERED AND SEVERAL TEAMS ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN THE PLAYOFF CHASE, SOME BY STAGING IMPROBABLE COMEBACKS.



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

▲ **SIMMERING SIGNAL-CALLER. Chris Simms tossed three TD passes to help Tampa Bay rally past Washington.**

Shaun Alexander became the first player in NFL history *to score 15 touchdowns in five consecutive seasons, netting three of them in a win over the Rams that increased the Seahawks' lead in the NFC West. He finished with a Week 10-best 165 rushing yards, and his 17-yard TD burst with 1:12 to play cemented Seattle's 31-16 triumph.*

Chicago's Nathan Vasher recorded the longest touchdown in league history when he raced 108 yards with a missed field goal against the 49ers. The return came on the final play of the first half and spurred the NFC North-leading Bears to a 17-9 victory.

The Vikings, meanwhile, became the first team to score touchdowns on an interception return, kickoff return, and a punt return in the same game. Yet it still took Paul Edinger's 48-yard field goal with 10 seconds to play to claim a 24-21 win over the Giants.

Also in Week 10, Tampa Bay, New England, and Dallas tallied late touchdowns to post come-from-behind victories. The Buccaneers, who scored on Chris Simms' 30-yard pass to Edell Shepherd with 58 seconds to go, then got a two-point conversion from Mike Alstott to finish off their 36-35 triumph over Washington.

AFC West leader Denver won at Oakland while Carolina stood alone atop the NFC South after beating the N.Y. Jets, 30-3.

David Drapkin/Getty Images

ROY ON THE RUN. Dallas' Roy Williams brings back an interception 46 yards for a TD, completing the Cowboys' comeback win at Philadelphia.

SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

In a Monday night game during the season's second week, the Cowboys held a late 13-point lead at home against a division rival. But they ended up losing when Washington struck for two quick TDs to take a 14-13 decision. In Week 10, the Cowboys—again playing on Monday night—found themselves behind by 13 on the road to a division rival. This time, however, they won, rallying to shock the Eagles, 21-20. Drew Bledsoe's 20-yard touchdown pass to Terry Glenn closed the gap to six points with 3:04 to go and, two plays later, cornerback Roy Williams stepped in front of Donovan McNabb's sideline pass and returned it 46 yards for the game-winning score. "I didn't really think he was going to throw the ball," Williams said. "My eyes lit up and the rest is history." The victory pushed Dallas to 6-3 and into a first-place tie with the Giants in the NFC East.

"Maybe when I'm too old and slow to play receiver, they'll let me play quarterback."
— WR Antwaan Randle El, after throwing a 51-yard touchdown pass in the Steelers' win over Cleveland.

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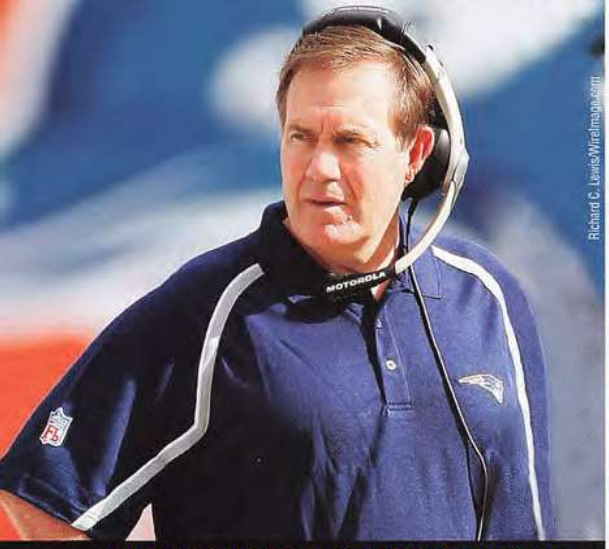
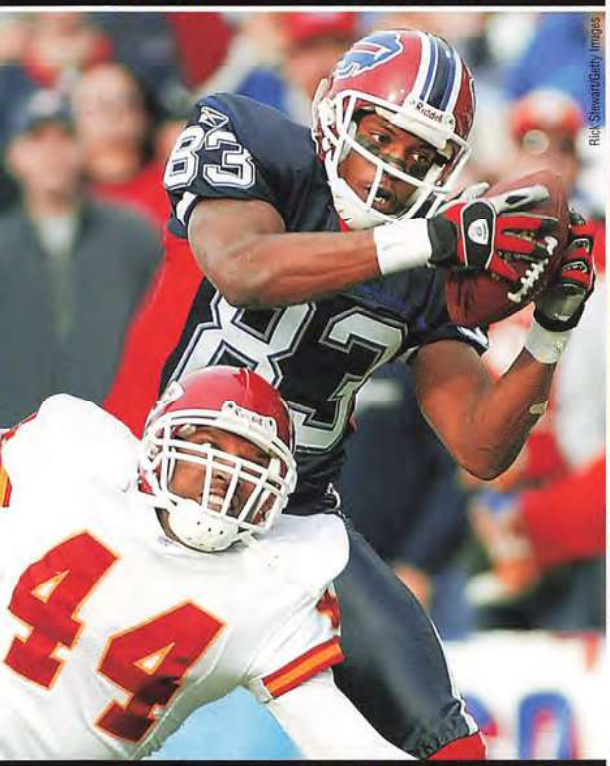


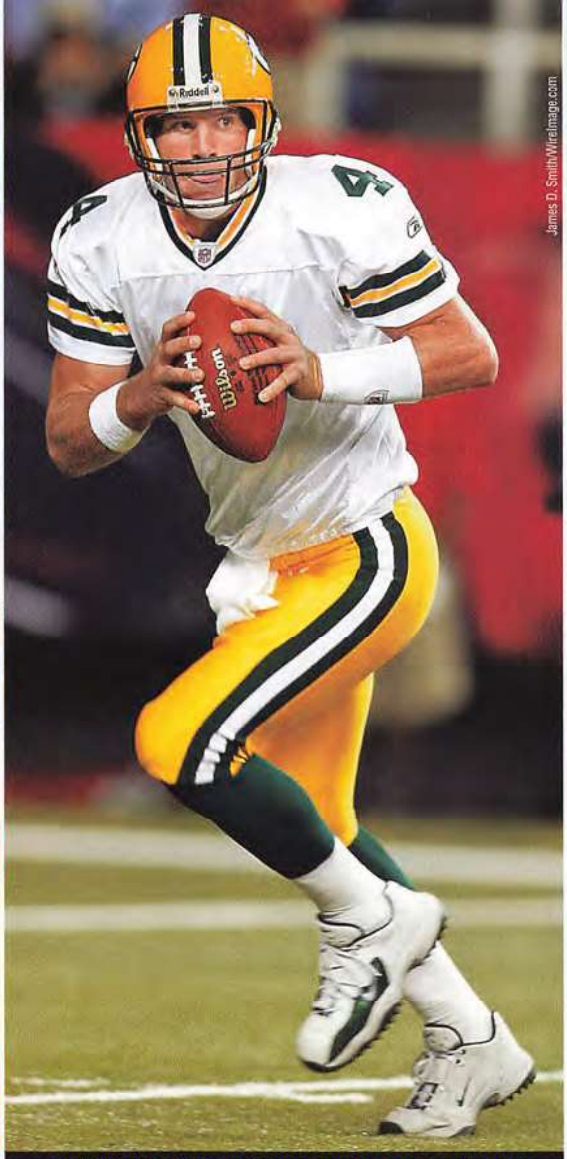
Richard C. Lewis/Wirelmage.com

▲ A PAT ON THE BACK. Bill Belichick's Patriots scored late, then stopped Miami from doing the same, for a 23-16 win.



Rick Stewart/Getty Images

▲ LEE-DING ROLE. The Bills' Lee Evans caught two touchdown passes from J.P. Losman in a 14-3 win over Kansas city.



James D. Smith/Wirelmage.com

▲ PACKING A PUNCH. Brett Favre (26 of 39, 252 yards, 1 TD) was right on target as Green Bay surprised the Falcons.

QBs On Call

The Bills turned to J.P. Losman and the Steelers relied on a pair of reserves and a bit of trickery to post their Week 10 wins. Buffalo, which stayed one game behind the Patriots in the AFC East, trailed Kansas City, 3-0, when starting quarterback Kelly Holcomb sustained a concussion. In came Losman, who tossed 33-yard and 29-yard TD passes to Lee Evans to spark a 14-3 win. "I feel like it was a comeback for me," said Losman, who had started Buffalo's first four games. "Whether I played good or bad, I loved the way I focused." The Bills' defense had a hand in the victory, too, collecting six sacks and four turnovers. Pittsburgh, already without starting QB Ben Roethlisberger, lost Charlie Batch to a broken hand in the third quarter against the Browns. Batch had guided the Steelers to a 17-7 halftime lead, capped by his 1-yard TD run. Antwaan Randle El, a college QB turned receiver, then threw a 51-yard TD pass to Hines Ward and Tommy Maddox directed two more scoring drives, helping Pittsburgh pull even with the idle Bengals atop the AFC North.

Week Ten-sations

The Patriots edged Miami on Tom Brady's 16-yard scoring pass to Ben Watson with 2:16 to play. But they had to survive one last Dolphins' drive that got inside the 10-yard line before claiming the 23-16 win…Peyton Manning and Marvin Harrison became the league's first QB-receiver duo to amass 10,000 yards. Included in that was a 30-yard TD pass during the Colts' win over the Texans…Hines Ward had eight catches in the Steelers' victory to set the franchise record with 543…Tony Gonzalez broke the Chiefs' all-time standard for receiving yards (7,362). In the same game, guard Will Shields became just the fourth non-kicker since the AFL-NFL merger to start 200 straight games. ■

WEEK 10

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, November 13

@ Buffalo 14 ..... Kansas City 3
@ Carolina 30 ..... N.Y. Jets 3
@ Chicago 17 ..... San Francisco 9
Denver 31 ..... @ Oakland 17
@ Detroit 29 ..... Arizona 21
Green Bay 33 ..... @ Atlanta 25
@ Indianapolis 31 ..... Houston 17
@ Jacksonville 30 ..... Baltimore 3
Minnesota 24 ..... @ N.Y. Giants 21
New England 23 ..... @ Miami 16
@ Seattle 31 ..... St. Louis 16
@ Tampa Bay 36 ..... Washington 35
@ Pittsburgh 34 ..... Cleveland 21

Monday, November 14

Dallas 21 ..... @ Philadelphia 20

Open Dates: Cincinnati, New Orleans, San Diego, Tennessee

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Hines Ward (WR, Steelers) – Caught game-high eight passes for 124 yards, including a 51-yard touchdown, to help defeat Cleveland.

AFC Defensive Player

Mike Peterson (LB, Jaguars) – Had 15 tackles, one sack, and returned an interception 26 yards for a score in victory over Baltimore.

AFC Special Teams Player

Brian Moorman (P, Bills) – Averaged 48.2 yards on five punts, placing three inside the 20, in win over Chiefs.

NFC Offensive Player

Samkon Gado (RB, Packers) – Had 103 yards rushing, including scoring runs of 2 and 9 yards, and caught a TD pass in triumph at Atlanta.

NFC Defensive Player

Darren Sharper (S, Vikings) – Four tackles, five passes defensed, and three interceptions, one he returned 92 yards for a TD, to help beat Giants.

NFC Special Teams Player

Nathan Vasher (CB, Bears) – Set NFL record for longest TD with 108-yard return of missed FG in win over 49ers.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Samkon Gado (RB, Packers) – First career start and 23rd birthday made special by also winning this honor.

WEEK 11: POINTED EFFORTS ALL AROUND

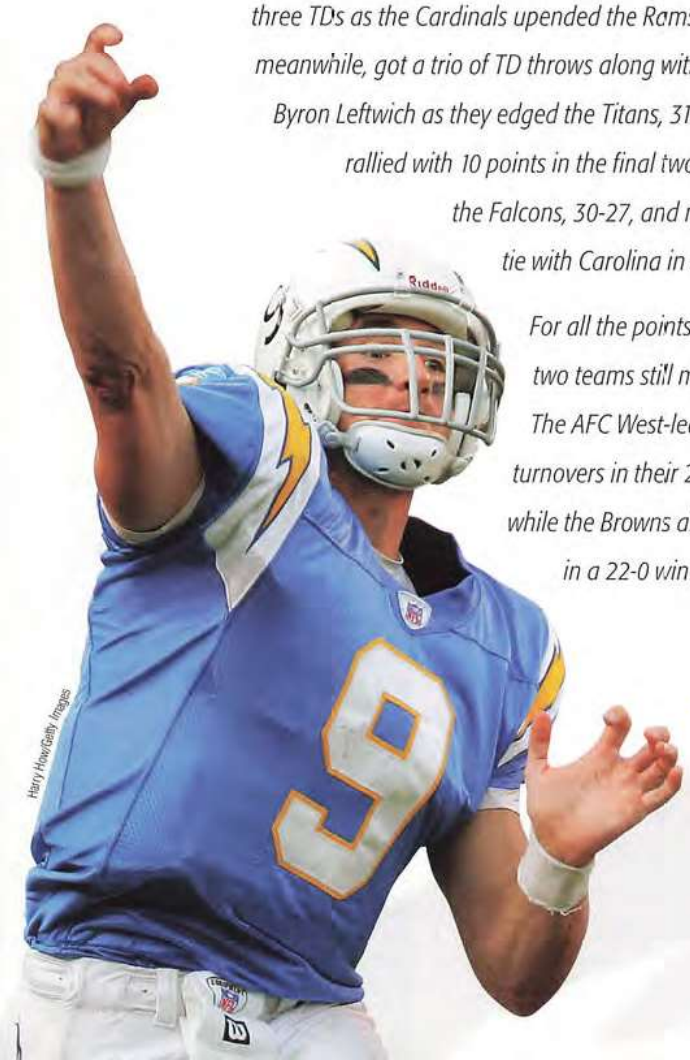
EVERY TEAM AND MOST SCOREBOARDS WERE KEPT BUSY IN WEEK 11 AS THE SEASON'S STRETCH RUN OFFICIALLY BEGAN. THE OFFENSES WERE IN SYNC WITH SEVEN TEAMS REACHING 30 POINTS AND THREE TOPPING THE 40-POINT PLATEAU.

Division leaders Indianapolis and Cincinnati clashed *at Paul Brown Stadium, where they combined for 82 points in the Colts' 45-37 triumph. Peyton Manning threw for 365 yards and three touchdowns as Indy became the league's first team since the 1998 Broncos to start a season with 10 straight wins.*

Behind the efforts of Drew Brees, San Diego posted the highest-scoring week. Brees fired touchdown passes to four different receivers while directing a 48-10 win over the Bills. Kansas City wasn't far behind, overpowering Houston, 45-17, as Larry Johnson rushed for a franchise-record 211 yards and scored twice. With their wins, both teams improved to 6-4 and remained tied for second in the AFC West.

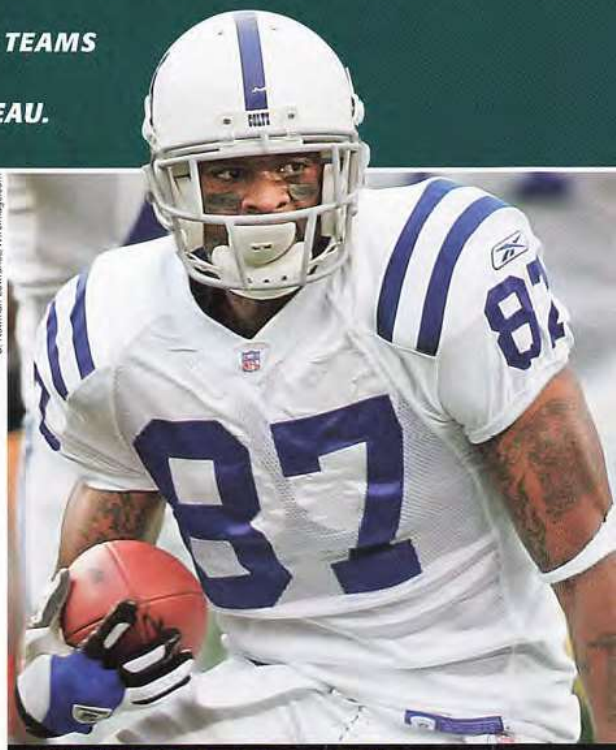
Also on the offensive were Arizona, Jacksonville, and Tampa Bay. Kurt Warner—making his first appearance in St. Louis since leaving the team he twice led to the Super Bowl—passed for 285 yards and three TDs as the Cardinals upended the Rams, 38-28. The Jaguars, meanwhile, got a trio of TD throws along with a scoring run from Byron Leftwich as they edged the Titans, 31-28. And the Buccaneers rallied with 10 points in the final two minutes to overtake the Falcons, 30-27, and move into a first-place tie with Carolina in the NFC South.

For all the points scored on the weekend, two teams still managed to post shutouts. The AFC West-leading Broncos forced five turnovers in their 27-0 blanking of the Jets, while the Browns allowed just 194 total yards in a 22-0 win over the Dolphins.



Harry How/Getty Images

◀ **IT'S A BREES. Drew Brees fires one of his four touchdown passes during the Chargers' 48-10 win over Buffalo.**



G. Newman Lowrance/Wirelmage.com

▲ **WAYNE'S WORLD. Reggie Wayne caught five passes, including a 66-yard TD, in the Colts' victory at Cincinnati.**

BELIEVING IN THE BEARS

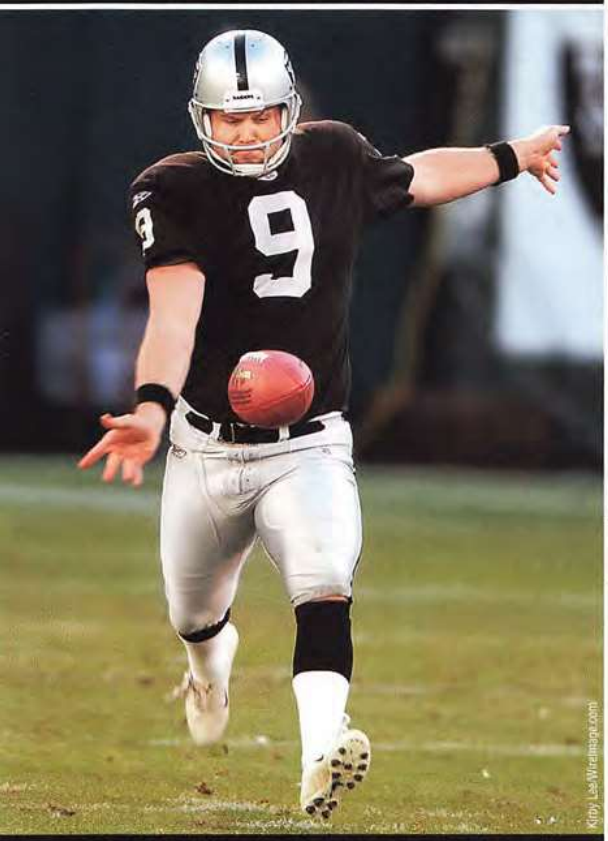
NFC North frontrunner Chicago cemented its status by knocking off a division leader and holding an opponent to fewer than 10 points for the sixth time on the year, beating Carolina, 13-3, at Soldier Field. The Panthers had scored at least 20 points in every game, but the Bears got to QB Jake Delhomme for eight sacks and allowed just 238 total yards. Nathan Vasher intercepted two passes before the game was 10 minutes old; the first set up a 3-yard TD catch by former Panther Muhsin Muhammad and the second led to Robbie Gould's 33-yard FG that put Chicago ahead 10-0. "I'm doing what the coaching staff asks me to do. I'm having the right progressions and the right reads," said Vasher. The win was the Bears' sixth in a row and snapped Carolina's six-game win streak, as Chicago improved to 7-3 in its quest to reach the playoffs for the first time since 2001.

"Our scheme got us seven yards, and effort got us the other 68."

— Browns QB Trent Dilfer, describing Reuben Droughn's 75-yard touchdown run in a win over Miami.

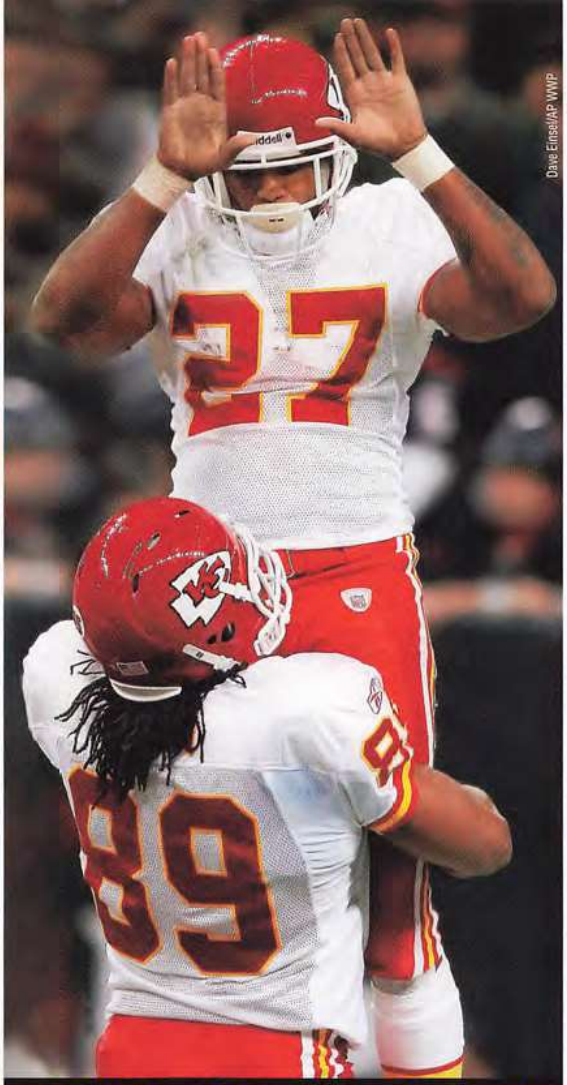
Al Messerschmidt/WireImage.com

▲ HE'S LOVIN' IT. Chicago head coach Lovie Smith looks on in approval during the Bears' sixth straight win.



Kirby Lee/WireImage.com

▲ JUST FOR KICKS. The Raiders' Shane Lechler set an NFL record by having a 50-yard punt in 30 straight games.



Dave Einsel/AP WWP

▲ A BIG LIFT. Kansas City's Larry Johnson (No. 27) is hoisted by teammate Jason Dunn after scoring a second-quarter TD.

Roads To Success

The Colts weren't the only team to win a critical road contest in Week 11. Tampa Bay traveled to Atlanta in a battle of 6-3 clubs and found itself in a 27-20 fourth-quarter hole after Michael Vick threw a 10-yard TD pass to Michael Jenkins. But the Bucs answered with an 11-play drive capped by Carnell Williams' 9-yard run to tie the game and, moments later, linebacker Derrick Brooks forced a fumble that set up Matt Bryant's 45-yard game-winning FG. In Tennessee, the Jaguars trailed on three occasions before Byron Leftwich's 7-yard TD pass to Matt Jones with 9:21 left gave them the lead for good. Jacksonville improved to 7-3, three games behind the Colts in the AFC South. Seattle pushed its record to an NFC-best 8-2 by slipping past host San Francisco, 27-25, when the 49ers missed a two-point conversion with less than 30 seconds to go. Minnesota continued to rebound, beating the Packers, 20-17, on Monday night at Lambeau Field. Paul Edinger kicked the game-winning 27-yard field goal as time expired, the second time on the season he beat Green Bay in the final moments. The win was the Vikings' third straight as they climbed to 5-5. Overall, eight road teams were victorious in Week 11.

Week 11 Essentials

Matt Stover's 44-yard field goal with 4:09 left in overtime lifted the Ravens over the Steelers, ending Pittsburgh's road winning streak at 11 games…Both NFC East co-leaders were victorious. In Dallas, Billy Cundiff kicked a franchise-record 56-yard field goal to help the Cowboys past Detroit, 20-7, while Eli Manning's 61-yard touchdown pass to Plaxico Burress with 5:24 to play allowed the N.Y. Giants to fend off the Eagles, 27-17. The win was the 600th in Giants' history…Marvin Harrison became the sixth NFL player with 900 catches, reaching the mark in just his 149th game, the fastest in league history. ■

WEEK 11

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, November 20

Arizona 38.....@ St. Louis 28
@ Baltimore 16.....Pittsburgh 13 (OT)
@ Chicago 13.....Carolina 3
@ Cleveland 22.....Miami 0
@ Dallas 20.....Detroit 7
@ Denver 27.....N.Y. Jets 0
Indianapolis 45.....@ Cincinnati 37
Jacksonville 31.....@ Tennessee 28
@ New England 24....New Orleans 17
@ N.Y. Giants 27.....Philadelphia 17
Oakland 16.....@ Washington 13
@ San Diego 48.....Buffalo 10
Seattle 27.....@ San Francisco 25
Tampa Bay 30.....@ Atlanta 27
Kansas City 45.....@ Houston 17

Monday, November 21

Minnesota 20.....@ Green Bay 17

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Larry Johnson (RB, Chiefs) – Rushed for 211 yards, the most in the NFL since Dec. 2003, with TD runs of 23 yards and 1 yard in win at Houston.

AFC Defensive Player

Andra Davis (LB, Browns) – Had 14 tackles, two pass break-ups, and a QB pressure that led to an interception in Cleveland's shutout of Miami.

AFC Special Teams Player

Matt Stover (K, Ravens) – Made all three of his FG attempts, capped by 44-yarder in OT, to beat Pittsburgh.

NFC Offensive Player

Kurt Warner (QB, Cardinals) – Posted a 115.9 passer rating (27 of 39, 285 yards) while throwing for three touchdowns in victory at St. Louis.

NFC Defensive Player

Nathan Vasher (CB, Bears) – Two interceptions, four tackles, and one forced fumble as Chicago's defense kept Carolina out of the end zone.

NFC Special Teams Player

David Tyree (WR, Giants) – Blocked a punt that led to a second-quarter TD and sparked win over Eagles.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Shawne Merriman (LB, Chargers) – Four tackles and two sacks (for 12 yards in losses) in win over Buffalo.

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WEEK 12: GOING THE (EXTRA) DISTANCE

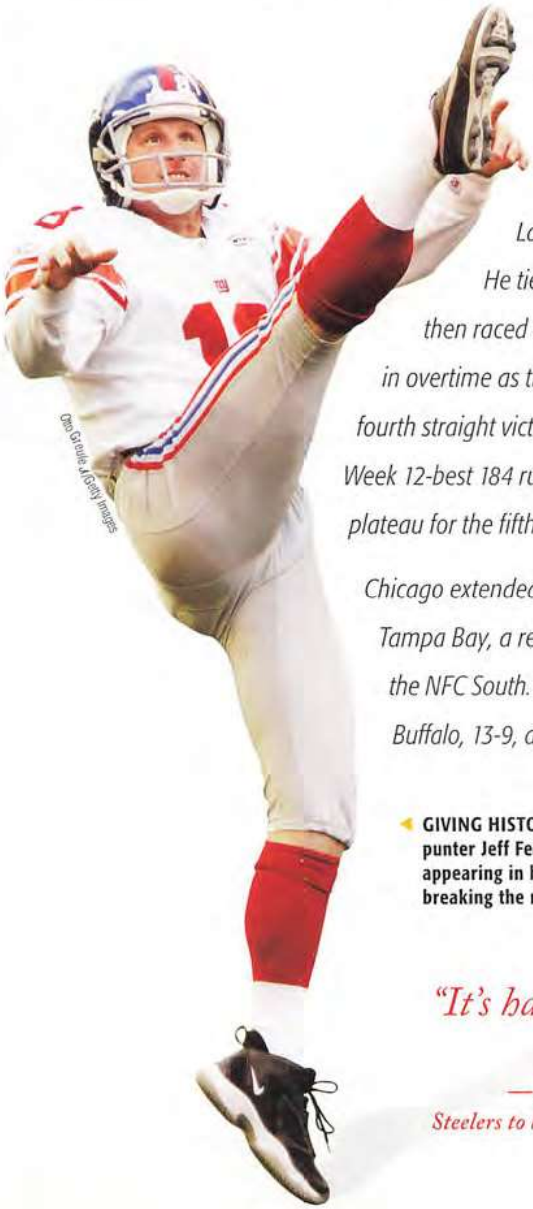
SEVERAL GAMES REMAINED IN DOUBT UNTIL THE FINAL MOMENTS AND 60 MINUTES STILL WEREN'T ENOUGH TO SETTLE FOUR CONTESTS DURING THE WEEKEND. SOME OF THOSE DOUBTS LINGERED, SINCE NO TEAM COULD CLAIM A POSTSEASON BERTH.

The Cowboys hosted Denver on Thanksgiving Day *in a battle of division leaders that needed an extra session to determine a winner. Dallas' Jason Witten had tied the game at 21-21 with his 4-yard TD catch, but in overtime the Broncos' Ron Dayne darted 55 yards with a run that set up Jason Elam's game-winning field goal. Denver improved to 9-2, two games ahead in the AFC West.*

With the Cowboys falling, the Giants had a chance to take control in the NFC East. They rallied late at Seattle, pulling even on Eli Manning's 18-yard TD pass to Amani Toomer, followed by a successful two-point conversion. Yet the Seahawks prevailed when Josh Brown kicked a 36-yard field goal late in overtime. Seattle, however, couldn't clinch the NFC West, thanks to St. Louis' dramatic rally from a 21-point halftime deficit to beat the Texans in overtime.

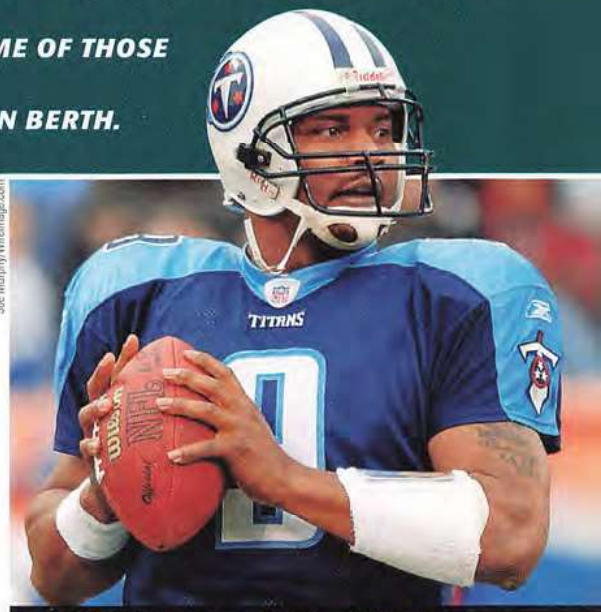
It was quite a day for San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson against Washington. He tied the game with a 32-yard TD run and then raced 42 yards with the winning score early in overtime as the Chargers beat the Redskins for their fourth straight victory. Tomlinson, who finished with a Week 12-best 184 rushing yards, topped the 1,000-yard plateau for the fifth straight season.

Chicago extended its winning streak to seven by edging Tampa Bay, a result that opened the door for Carolina in the NFC South. The Panthers scored a late TD to beat Buffalo, 13-9, and take over the top spot in the division.



Otto Greule Jr/Getty Images

◀ **GIVING HISTORY THE BOOT. N.Y. Giants punter Jeff Feagles set an NFL record by appearing in his 283rd consecutive game, breaking the mark held by Jim Marshall.**



Joe Murphy/WireImage.com

▲ **TITAN ON TARGET. Quarterback Steve McNair threw three touchdown passes to lead Tennessee past the 49ers.**

THE BENGAL BOUNCE

Head coach Marvin Lewis beat the team he used to work for and Cincinnati took a major step toward earning its first playoff berth since 1990 by outscoring Baltimore, 42-29. With Carson Palmer firing three touchdown passes and the defense forcing three turnovers, the Bengals built a 34-0 lead and then hung on as they improved to 8-3. Rudi Johnson, who rushed for 114 yards, scored on a 6-yard run to make it 10-0 and Palmer followed by hooking up with Chad Johnson, T.J. Houshmandzadeh, and Chris Henry in succession to blow the game open. The win set up a Week 13 showdown at defending AFC North champion Pittsburgh (7-4). "We still have an opportunity to control our own destiny and that's the best thing," said Lewis, who was the Ravens' defensive coordinator for six seasons, including 2000 when they won Super Bowl XXXV.

Joe Robbins/Getty Images

"It's hard to win 11 games in a season, let alone the first 11."

— Quarterback Peyton Manning after the Colts topped the Steelers to become just the 10th NFL team to start a season 11-0.

Elaine Thompson/AP WWP

▲ LET'S THINK THIS OVER. Head coach Mike Holmgren calls a timeout during Seattle's OT victory against the Giants.

Drew Hallowell/Wirelmage.com

▲ EAGLE EYES THE END ZONE. Brian Westbrook breaks free for a 27-yard touchdown run in Philly's win over Green Bay.

Elsa/Getty Images

▲ FOCUSED ON VICTORY. Darren Sharper nabs an end zone interception during the Vikings' 24-12 win over Cleveland.

Kevin C. Cox/Wirelmage.com

▲ T.J. WITH A TD. The Bengals' T.J. Houshmandzadeh caught nine passes, including a 30-yard TD against Baltimore.

From Harvard To Hero

As NFL debuts go, Ryan Fitzpatrick's may rival them all. The rookie QB, a seventh-round draft choice out of Harvard, may not have started the Rams' game at Houston, but he sure finished it with style. Fitzpatrick—who entered in the second quarter with St. Louis trailing, 14-0, after an injury sidelined starter Jamie Martin—connected with Kevin Curtis for a 56-yard TD to complete an improbable 33-27 overtime win. "He was running the show in the huddle, taking charge, doing what he had to do," said center Andy McCollum. "And you saw the results." Fitzpatrick's first touchdown pass was a 19-yarder to Torry Holt, but the Rams still trailed by 14 points midway through the fourth quarter. Steven Jackson's 1-yard run with 6:37 remaining made it 24-17, and after a Texans field goal, Fitzpatrick fired a 43-yard TD pass to Isaac Bruce with 26 seconds to play. St. Louis then recovered the onside kick, setting up Jeff Wilkins for a 47-yard field goal that forced the extra period. "You've always got a chance," said Fitzpatrick, who finished with a 117.4 passer rating. "The biggest thing when you're in those situations is you need to get everybody around you fired up."

Week 12 Toppers

Seattle's Shaun Alexander became the fourth player in NFL history with back-to-back 20 touchdown seasons, scoring on a 4-yard run in the victory over the Giants…Greg Wesley had three interceptions and Trent Green completed 19 of 26 passes for 323 yards as the Chiefs knocked off New England, 26-16 …The Rams' Isaac Bruce caught four passes for 94 yards and topped 12,000 career receiving yards, the 11th player in league history to do so. ■

WEEK 12

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Thursday, November 24
Atlanta 27.....@ Detroit 7
Denver 24 .....@ Dallas 21 (OT)

Sunday, November 27
Carolina 13 .....@ Buffalo 9
Chicago 13.....@ Tampa Bay 10
@ Cincinnati 42.....Baltimore 29
Jacksonville 24.....@ Arizona 17
@ Kansas City 26.....New England 16
Miami 33.....@ Oakland 21
@ Minnesota 24 .....Cleveland 12
@ Philadelphia 19 .....Green Bay 14
St. Louis 33 .....@ Houston 27 (OT)
San Diego 23....@ Washington 17 (OT)
@ Seattle 24 .....N.Y. Giants 21 (OT)
@ Tennessee 33.....San Francisco 22
New Orleans 21 .....@ N.Y. Jets 19

Monday, November 28
@ Indianapolis 26 .....Pittsburgh 7

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

LaDainian Tomlinson (RB, Chargers) – Rushed for 184 yards and scored three times, including a 42-yard TD run in overtime, to beat Washington.

AFC Defensive Player

Jason Taylor (DE, Dolphins) – Six tackles, three sacks, forced a fumble, recovered a fumble, and scored on a safety in victory at Oakland.

AFC Special Teams Player

Derrick Wimbush (KR-RB, Jaguars) – Returned kickoff 91 yards for a decisive TD in victory over Arizona.

NFC Offensive Player

Ryan Fitzpatrick (QB, Rams) – Completed 19 of 30 passes for 310 yards and three TDs in helping rally St. Louis to an OT win at Houston.

NFC Defensive Player

Alex Brown (DE, Bears) – Posted two sacks, defensed four passes, and forced a fumble in win at Tampa Bay.

NFC Special Teams Player

David Akers (K, Eagles) – Made all four of his FG attempts, including two in the game's final five minutes, as Eagles rallied past Green Bay.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Ryan Fitzpatrick (QB, Rams) – Had third-most passing yards (310) for any quarterback in his NFL debut.

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NFL YOUTH INITIATIVES

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NFL FLAG is the NFL's premier youth football league for kids ages 5-14. More than 100,000 youngsters in the United States and thousands more in Canada, Mexico, Japan, Europe and Asia play in NFL FLAG leagues. Started in 1996, NFL FLAG provides a safe, non-contact way for youngsters to become involved in football and learn the skills of the game. Fall and spring leagues are organized through local youth groups. All registered leagues and teams receive official NFL FLAG jerseys, FLAG belts and footballs. Regional tournaments and the NFL FLAG National Tournament of Champions take place each fall. For more information, log onto NFLyouthfootball.com

NFL JUNIOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

NFL Junior Player Development is an introductory youth tackle football program for boys ages 12-15. The program is designed to teach participants about every position through a step-by-step progression of skill instruction in a re-adaptive, fun and entertaining manner. For more information on this program, log onto NFLyouthfootball.com

NFL HIGH SCHOOL PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The NFL High School Player Development program provides inner-city, public high school students with academic counseling and specific football skill training by position. Each participant gains full awareness of what is necessary to become a successful collegiate student-athlete, along with the resources and information to meet the NCAA Clearinghouse requirements. The NFL HSPD program is supported by the NFL Youth Football Fund. For more information on this program, log onto NFLyouthfootball.com.

NFL PEPSI PUNT, PASS AND KICK

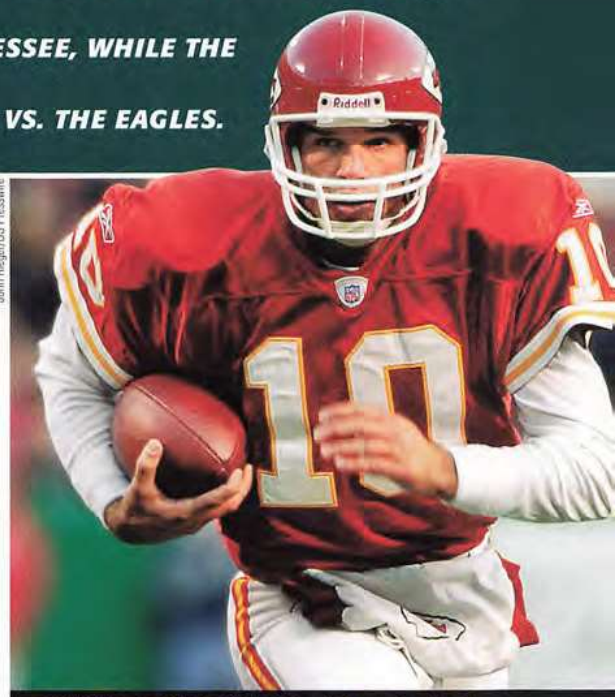
The NFL Pepsi Punt, Pass & Kick program attracts more than 4 million youngsters each season. Dating back to 1961, the program gives boys and girls ages 8-15 the opportunity to compete in the oldest and largest national youth skills competition. Several thousand schools have added PPK to their physical education curricula and thousands of youth organizations hold local PPK competitions. The NFL provides free PPK competitions kits, which include a manual, two PPK footballs, two kicking tees, ribbons and other materials to help promote local competitions. For more information on the PPK program, log onto NFLyouthfootball.com

NFL STREET UNPLUGGED

NFL Street Unplugged is the first interactive on-field sports and video game challenge of its kind. The experience allows participants to combine creative on-field play with NFL Street Video Game skills. Teams of 3 compete in a round-robin of four minute games, with the objective of scoring and preventing as many points as possible. Style points are awarded for skills such as diving one-handed receptions, and behind the back throws and catches. On field scores are combined with on-site NFL Street video game scores to determine an overall champion. Log onto NFLyouthfootball.com and click onto the NFL Street Unplugged for more information.

WEEK 13: TWO TAKE THE PLAYOFF PLUNGE

INDIANAPOLIS AND SEATTLE BECAME THE FIRST TWO TEAMS TO ANSWER THE POSTSEASON CALL. THE HIGH-FLYING COLTS EARNED THEIR SPOT BY BEATING TENNESSEE, WHILE THE SEAHAWKS CLINCHED THE NFC WEST BEFORE TAKING THE FIELD VS. THE EAGLES.



John Rieger/US Presswire

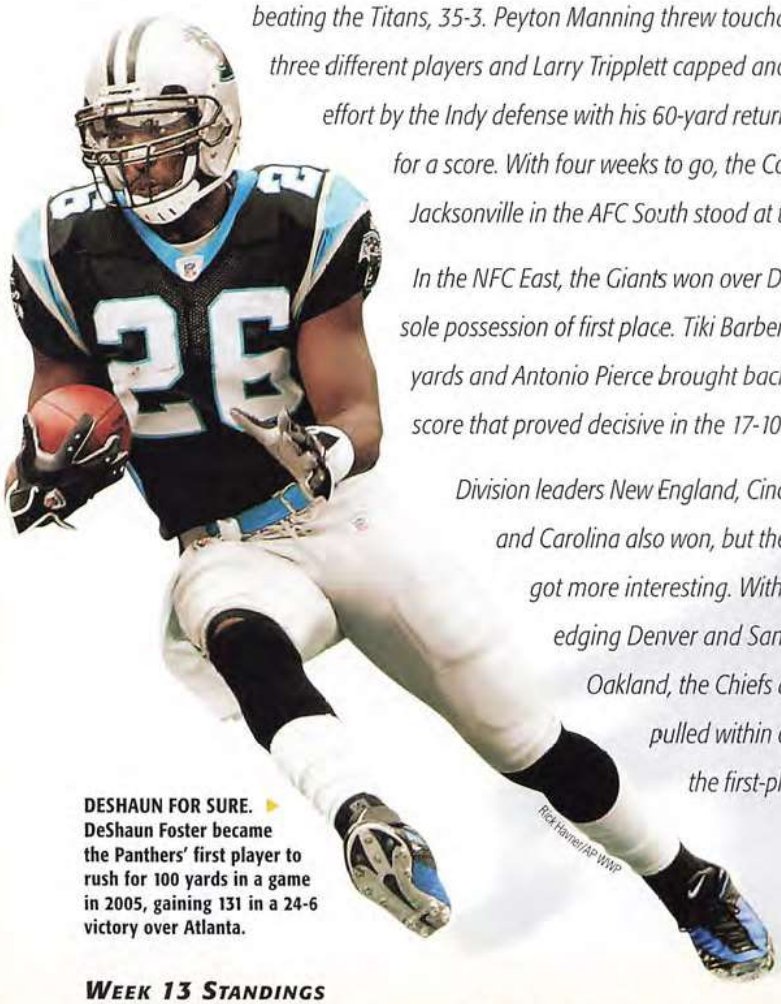
▲ **GREENER PASTURES. With QB Trent Green showing the way, the Chiefs beat Denver to pull closer in the AFC West.**

Seattle didn't let up, however, closing out Week 13 by dealing Philadelphia *a 42-0 shutout on Monday night. The Seahawks' defense forced six turnovers and scored three times with Andre Dyson returning an interception and a fumble recovery for touchdowns and Lofa Tatupu bringing back another pickoff for a TD. The win was Seattle's eighth straight, equaling a franchise record, as the team improved to 10-2.*

The Colts improved to 12-0, becoming just the fifth team in NFL history to do so, by beating the Titans, 35-3. Peyton Manning threw touchdown passes to three different players and Larry Tripplett capped another stellar effort by the Indy defense with his 60-yard return of a fumble for a score. With four weeks to go, the Colts' lead over Jacksonville in the AFC South stood at three games.

In the NFC East, the Giants won over Dallas to grab sole possession of first place. Tiki Barber rushed for 115 yards and Antonio Pierce brought back a fumble for a score that proved decisive in the 17-10 triumph.

Division leaders New England, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Carolina also won, but the AFC West race got more interesting. With Kansas City edging Denver and San Diego beating Oakland, the Chiefs and Chargers pulled within one game of the first-place Broncos.



Rick Havner/AP Wire

DESHAUN FOR SURE. DeShaun Foster became the Panthers' first player to rush for 100 yards in a game in 2005, gaining 131 in a 24-6 victory over Atlanta.

SQUEEZING OUT VICTORIES

All three Florida teams won in Week 13, with two posting rallies. Miami found itself in a 21-0 hole against Buffalo before the game was one quarter old and still trailed by 20 points with 12 minutes to go. But Ricky Williams ran for a score and Sage Rosenfels followed with a touchdown pass to Ronnie Brown to get the Dolphins within 23-17. With six seconds to play, Rosenfels floated a 4-yard TD pass to Chris Chambers for the win. That was the last of Chambers' 15 catches and 238 yards, the best numbers by an NFL receiver since 2002. "You talk about playing 60 minutes, and it's a cliche, but this was an example of that," said Miami coach Nick Saban. The Jaguars rallied past Cleveland, 20-14, behind a pair of David Garrard touchdown passes, while Tampa Bay's Chris Simms connected with Joey Galloway for the game's lone TD in a 10-3 triumph over New Orleans.

WEEK 13 STANDINGS

*clinched division title **clinched playoff berth

AFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England	7-5-0	259	282
Miami	5-7-0	219	240
Buffalo	4-8-0	184	247
N.Y. Jets	2-10-0	143	264
AFC North	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Cincinnati	9-3-0	327	239
Pittsburgh	7-5-0	274	225
Baltimore	4-8-0	161	241
Cleveland	4-8-0	183	214

AFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Indianapolis**	12-0-0	366	162
Jacksonville	9-3-0	255	201
Tennessee	3-9-0	239	319
Houston	1-11-0	183	341
AFC West	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Denver	9-3-0	310	221
Kansas City	8-4-0	301	257
San Diego	8-4-0	357	229
Oakland	4-8-0	249	296

NFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	8-4-0	319	218
Dallas	7-5-0	253	205
Washington	6-6-0	241	233
Philadelphia	5-7-0	229	288
NFC North	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Chicago	9-3-0	201	127
Minnesota	7-5-0	219	273
Detroit	4-8-0	190	241
Green Bay	2-10-0	239	242

NFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Carolina	9-3-0	290	194
Tampa Bay	8-4-0	226	199
Atlanta	7-5-0	277	237
New Orleans	3-9-0	183	295
NFC West	**W-L-T**	**PF**	**PA**
Seattle*	10-2-0	338	208
St. Louis	5-7-0	294	351
Arizona	4-8-0	239	302
San Francisco	2-10-0	183	340

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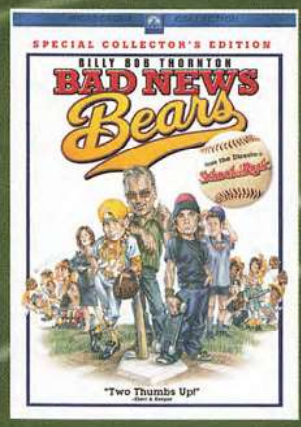

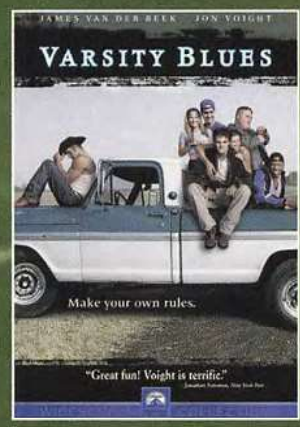

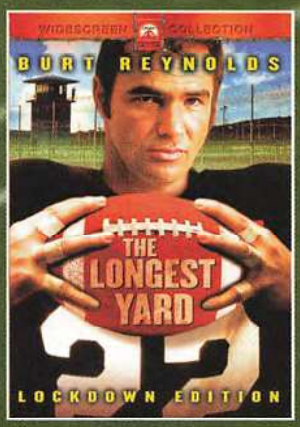

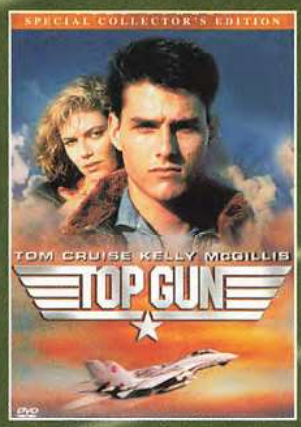

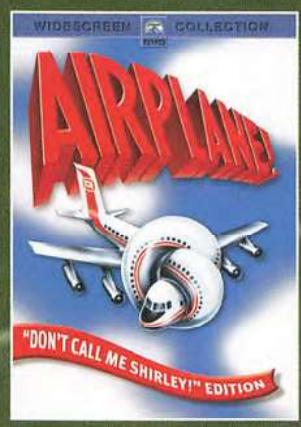

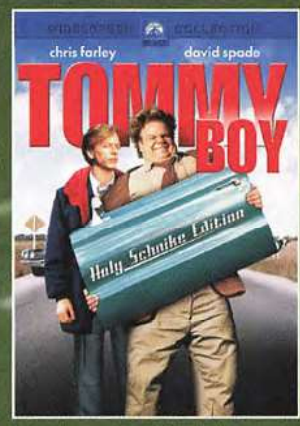

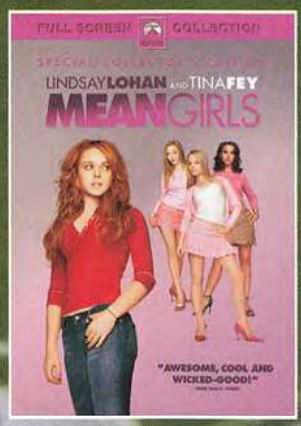

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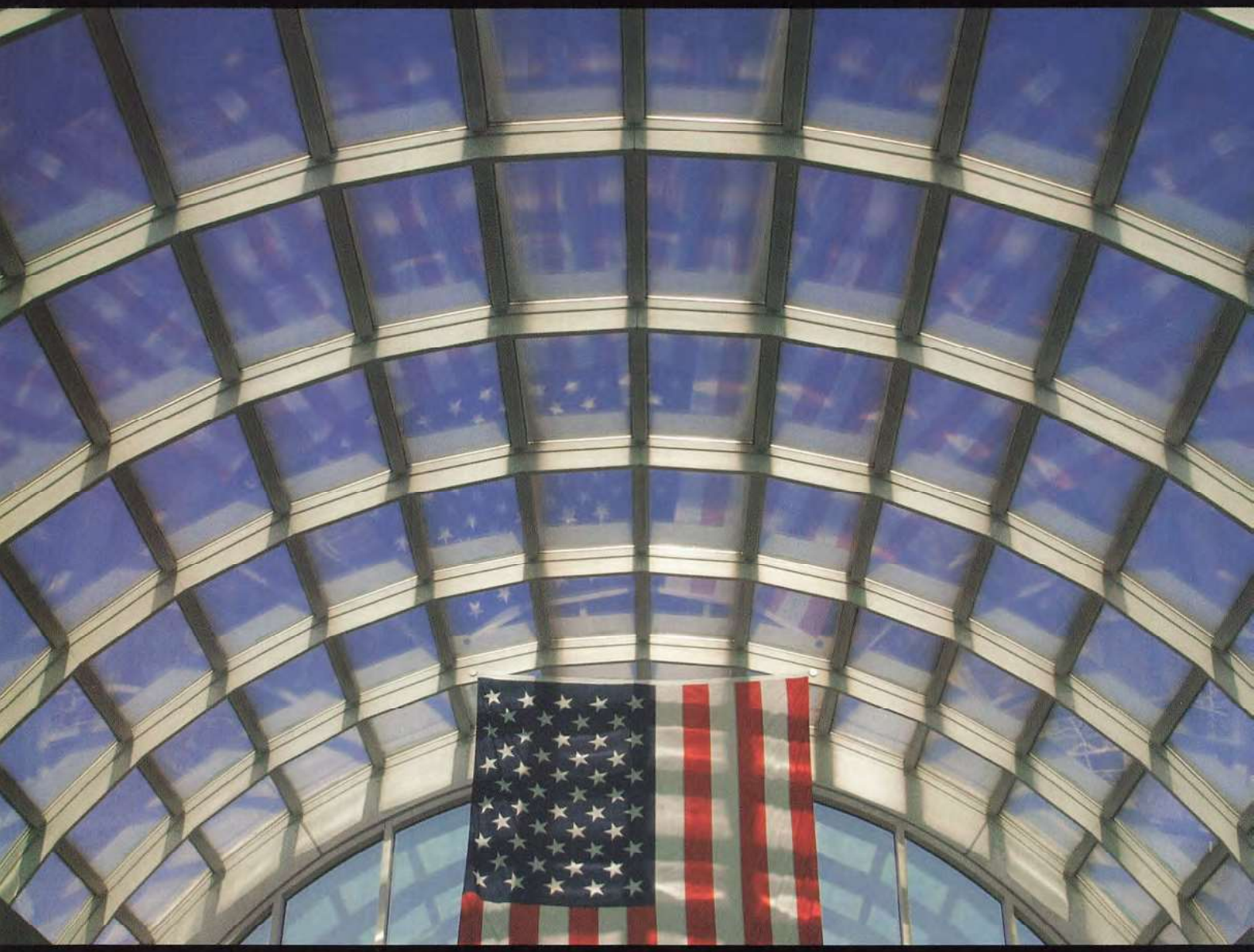

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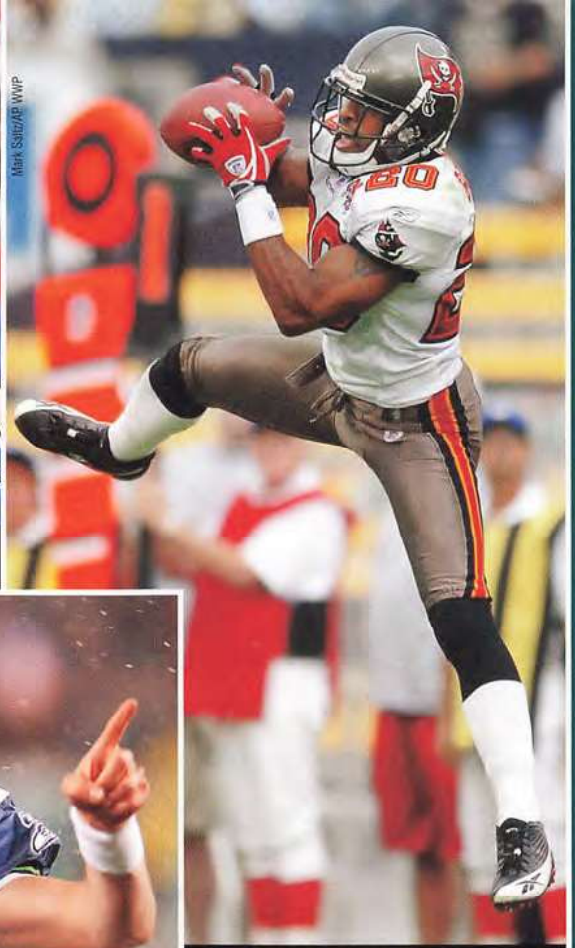
Rich Kane/US Presswire

▲ GIANTS STEP FORWARD. Head coach Tom Coughlin likes what he sees during the Giants' divisional win over Dallas.



Mark Saltz/AP Wire

Kirby Lee/WireImage.com

▲ THE WEST IS WON. Matt Hasselbeck's Seahawks were first to clinch a division title.

▲ IT'S ME AGAIN. Ronde Barber leaps to make one of his three interceptions in Tampa Bay's win over the Saints.

On The Western Front

Larry Johnson had his fifth straight 100-yard rushing game, gaining 140 as the Chiefs upended Denver, 31-27, in an AFC West showdown that was tied on four separate occasions. After Jason Elam's 40-yard field goal gave the Broncos a 27-24 fourth-quarter lead, KC drove for the winning score capped by Johnson's 4-yard run, his second touchdown of the day. The Chiefs then hung on by stopping Denver on a fourth-and-1 near midfield with two minutes remaining, winning for the fourth time in their last five games while snapping Denver's four-game win streak. It also pulled Kansas City within a game of the AFC West leaders. But they weren't the only team making a move in the division. San Diego's Michael Turner scored on a 4-yard run late in the second quarter, snapping a 10-10 tie as the Chargers pulled away to beat the Raiders, 34-10, in a game that had just one penalty. Drew Brees completed 17 of 22 passes and threw a pair of touchdowns for the defending division champs. Kansas City last ruled the AFC West in 2003; Denver's last title came in 1998, en route to winning Super Bowl XXXIII.

Week 13 Thrills

Carson Palmer threw three TD passes and Rudi Johnson ran for two scores as Cincinnati took control of the AFC North by beating Pittsburgh, 38-31… Arizona had a pair of 100-yard receivers—Anquan Boldin (11 catches, 156 yards) and Larry Fitzgerald (8 catches, 129 yards)—in its 17-10 win over the 49ers…Nathan Vasher's 45-yard interception return for a TD with 3:06 to play clinched Chicago's 19-7 victory over Green Bay…Brad Johnson threw for 256 yards and two touchdowns as Minnesota won its fifth straight game, 21-16, over Detroit…Baltimore and Houston had four lead changes in the fourth quarter alone, but it was the Ravens who were ahead at the end thanks to Matt Stover's 38-yard field goal with six seconds to go…The Patriots outgained the Jets, 397-164, and kept control of the ball for better than 38 minutes in their 16-3 home victory. ■

WEEK 13

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, December 4

Arizona 17 .....@ San Francisco 10
@ Baltimore 16 .....Houston 15
@ Carolina 24 .....Atlanta 6
@ Chicago 19 .....Green Bay 7
Cincinnati 38.....@ Pittsburgh 31
@ Indianapolis 35 .....Tennessee 3
Jacksonville 20 .....@ Cleveland 14
@ Kansas City 31 .....Denver 27
@ Miami 24 .....Buffalo 23
Minnesota 21 .....@ Detroit 16
@ New England 16.....N.Y. Jets 3
@ N.Y. Giants 17 .....Dallas 10
Tampa Bay 10.....@ New Orleans 3*
Washington 24 .....@ St. Louis 9
@ San Diego 34 .....Oakland 10

Monday, December 5

Seattle 42.....@ Philadelphia 0

Played in Baton Rouge

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Chris Chambers (WR, Dolphins) – Set franchise records for receptions (15) and receiving yards (238) and caught game-winning TD against Buffalo.

AFC Defensive Player

Terrell Suggs (LB, Ravens) – Made six tackles, had three sacks, and forced a fumble in victory over Houston.

AFC Special Teams Player

Tab Perry (KR-WR, Bengals) – Posted 39.4-yard average on five kickoff returns, including a 94-yarder to set up go-ahead TD in win at Pittsburgh.

NFC Offensive Player

DeShaun Foster (RB, Panthers) – Rushed for 131 yards, averaging 5.5 yards per carry, and had TDs rushing and receiving in victory over Atlanta.

NFC Defensive Player

Andre Dyson (CB, Seahawks) – Ran back an interception 72 yards for a TD and returned a fumble 25 yards for a score in triumph over Eagles.

NFC Special Teams Player

Jeff Feagles (P, Giants) – Averaged 44.7 yards on six punts, dropping two inside the 20, in win over Dallas.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Charlie Frye (QB, Browns) –Threw for 226 yards and two TDs, posting a passer rating of 136.7, vs. Jacksonville.

WEEK 14: A DAY OF GREAT ESCAPES

POSTSEASON CONTENDERS CINCINNATI, DALLAS, AND THE N.Y. GIANTS ALL PULLED OUT WINS IN HOTLY CONTESTED GAMES IN WEEK 14. BUT NO ONE WAS ABLE TO JOIN THE LIST OF PLAYOFF QUALIFIERS, LEAVING 18 TEAMS VYING FOR THE FINAL 10 BERTHS.

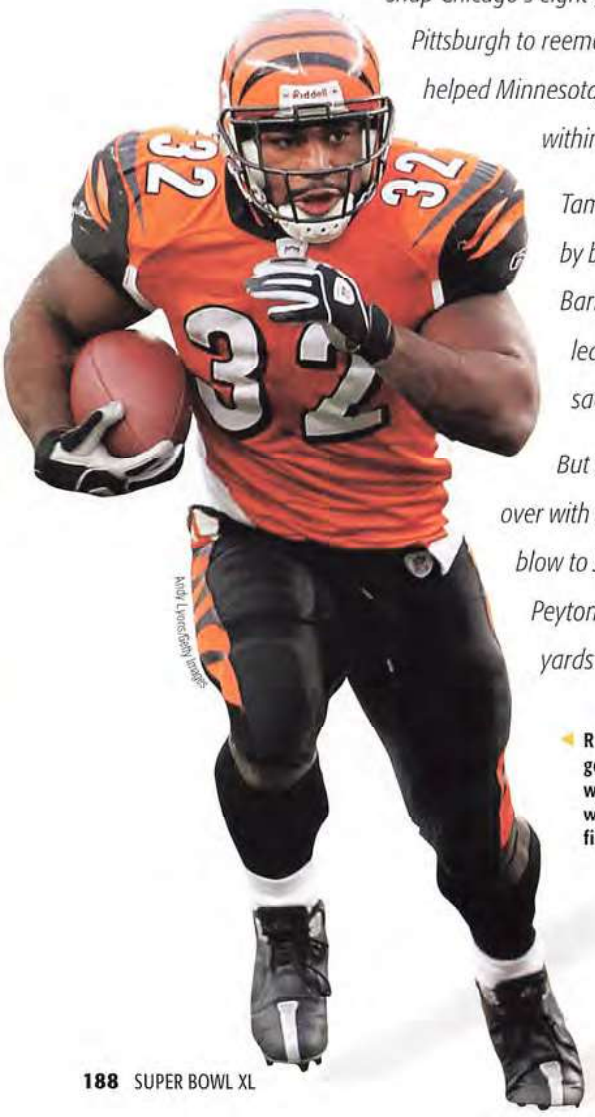
The Bengals reached double figures in wins for the first time since 1988 *and maintained their two-game lead in the AFC North by knocking off division rival Cleveland, 23-20. Rudi Johnson rushed for 169 yards and keyed a 43-yard drive that led to Shayne Graham's game-winning 37-yard field goal on the final play of regulation.*

Dallas trailed Kansas City with under a minute to play, but Drew Bledsoe's third TD pass of the game—a 1-yarder to Dan Campbell—lifted the Cowboys to a 31-28 victory. But they still couldn't gain ground on the Giants. New York held on to its one-game lead in the NFC East by edging the Eagles on Jay Feely's 36-yard field goal late in overtime, sweeping the season series from Philadelphia for the first time since 2000.

With Jerome Bettis running for a pair of scores, the Steelers beat the Bears, 21-9, to snap Chicago's eight-game winning streak. That allowed Pittsburgh to reemerge in the AFC playoff hunt and helped Minnesota, which rolled over the Rams, pull within a game of first in the NFC North.

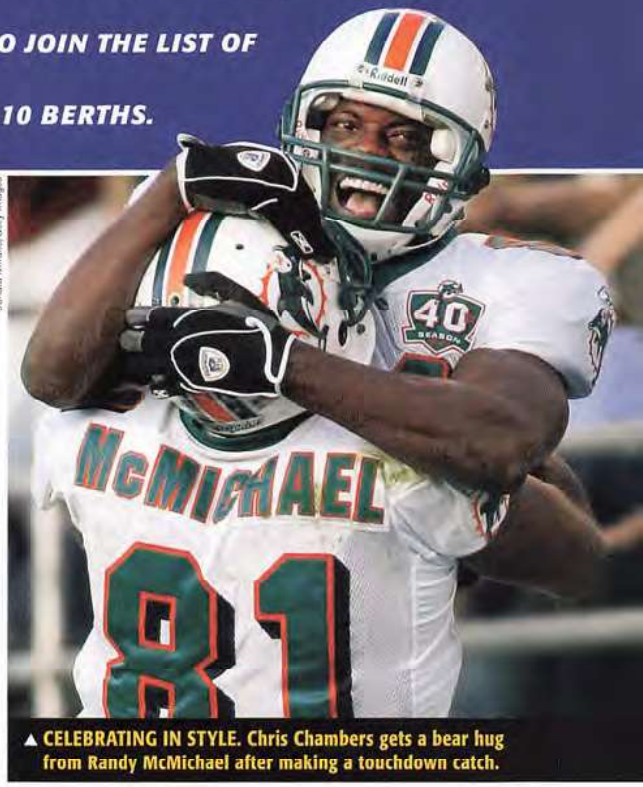
Tampa Bay tied up the NFC South by beating Carolina as the Bucs' Ronde Barber became the first cornerback in league history to have 20 career sacks and 20 interceptions.

But the AFC South race was officially over with the Colts delivering a knockout blow to Jacksonville, 26-18. In that game, Peyton Manning reached 3,000 passing yards for the eighth straight season.



Andy Lyons/Getty Images

RUDI ON THE RUN. Rudi Johnson goes for a gain during the Bengals' win over the Browns. Johnson finished with 169 yards and scored Cincinnati's first touchdown.



Donald Miralle/Getty Images

▲ CELEBRATING IN STYLE. Chris Chambers gets a bear hug from Randy McMichael after making a touchdown catch.

THE CHAMPS CHARGE BACK

The Patriots moved closer to the AFC East title and with it the opportunity to go for an unprecedented third straight Super Bowl crown by beating Buffalo, 35-7. It was the team's fourth win in five games after a 4-4 start. Tom Brady completed 29 of 38 passes for 329 yards and threw a pair of touchdowns; he also ran for a TD to open the scoring. Corey Dillon rushed for 102 yards, his first 100-yard game of the year, and plowed into the end zone with a 12-yard run that made it 14-0. While New England racked up a franchise-record 32 first downs, its defense might have been even better. The Patriots limited the Bills to eight first downs and 183 yards in total offense, including 14 yards rushing. "We're starting to roll," said defensive lineman Richard Seymour. "I thought the offense did a good job creating situations for us, and it just rolled over to the defense." The Patriots were denied clinching their third straight division crown, however, when Miami upended San Diego, 23-21, later in the day.

"It was that type of ballgame: AFC North, cold weather, and a lot at stake."

— Cincinnati RB Rudi Johnson, after the Bengals beat Cleveland with a field goal on the game's final play.

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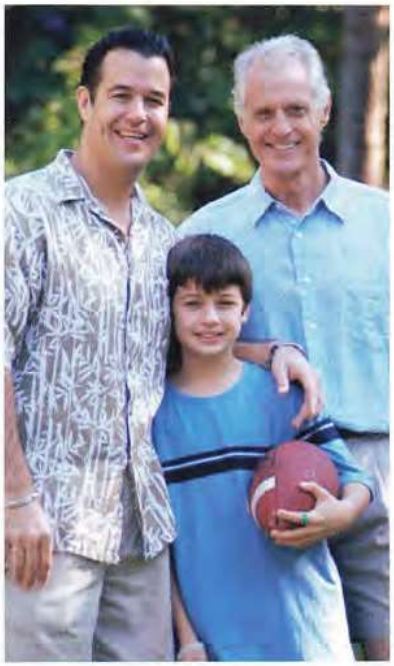

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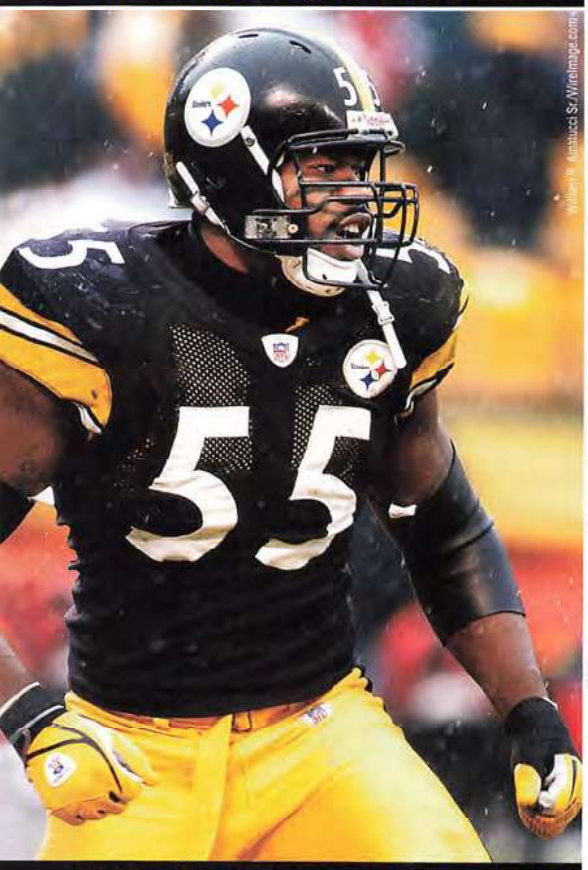
Dave Martin/AP WWP

▲ DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? Head coach Jim Mora talks with linesman Tom Stabile during Atlanta's win over the Saints.

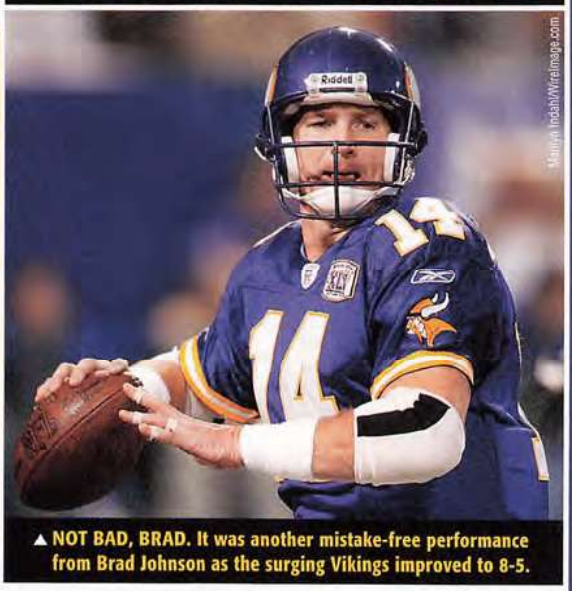
Rick Stewart/Getty Images

▲ DILLON'S CHILLIN'. Corey Dillon heads for the end zone with the Patriots' second TD in their 35-7 victory at Buffalo.



William Phillips Antiucci Sr./Wirelmage.com

▲ RE-PORTING FOR DUTY. Linebacker Joey Porter was part of a standout defensive effort as the Steelers stymied the Bears.



Marilyn Indahl/Wirelmage.com

▲ NOT BAD, BRAD. It was another mistake-free performance from Brad Johnson as the surging Vikings improved to 8-5.

Minnesota Makes Its Run

The Vikings continued their playoff push, beating St. Louis for their sixth straight win. Although the Rams had the edge in total yards and first downs, the Minnesota defense again made big plays, forcing six turnovers. "I think we're jelling," said Brian Williams, who had two interceptions. "Everybody's just putting it together and figuring out what our defense is all about." QB Brad Johnson remained undefeated as a starter, completing 16 of 25 passes for 146 yards. Koren Robinson ran a 14-yard reverse for the game's first TD, while Michael Bennett and Ciatrick Fason had third-quarter scoring runs after St. Louis tied the game. The win placed the Vikings in a tie with Dallas and Atlanta for the NFC's second Wild Card berth.

Week 14 Fillers

Matt Hasselbeck threw four touchdown passes—two of them to Bobby Engram—and Shaun Alexander rushed for 108 yards as Seattle flew past the 49ers, 41-3. It was the Seahawks' ninth straight win and marked the third time in eight games they scored at least 40 points...Michael Vick threw for 231 yards and a touchdown and had TD runs of 2 and 17 yards as the Falcons knocked off New Orleans, 37-17 ...Samkon Gado rushed for 171 yards and scored on a 64-yard run and Ryan Longwell kicked a 28-yard field goal in overtime as the Packers beat the Lions, 16-13...The Chiefs' Larry Johnson scored three times and set a franchise record with his sixth straight 100-yard rushing game, netting 143 in KC's setback in Dallas...Chris Chambers caught two touchdown passes in Miami's win at San Diego ...Denver took advantage of the losses by Kansas City and the Chargers by beating the Ravens, 12-10, to take a two-game lead in the AFC West...The Rams' Marshall Faulk became the NFL's career leader in yards receiving by a running back (6,801). ■

WEEK 14

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Sunday, December 11

@ Cincinnati 23.....Cleveland 20
@ Dallas 31.....Kansas City 28
@ Denver 12.....Baltimore 10
Indianapolis 26.....@ Jacksonville 18
Miami 23.....@ San Diego 21
@ Minnesota 27.....St. Louis 13
New England 35.....@ Buffalo 7
N.Y. Giants 26...@ Philadelphia 23 (OT)
@ N.Y. Jets 26.....Oakland 10
@ Pittsburgh 21.....Chicago 9
@ Seattle 41.....San Francisco 3
@ Tampa Bay 20.....Carolina 10
@ Tennessee 13.....Houston 10
Washington 17.....@ Arizona 13
@ Green Bay 16.....Detroit 13 (OT)

Monday, December 12

@ Atlanta 37.....New Orleans 17

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Jerome Bettis (RB, Steelers) – Rushed for 101 yards and scored twice–on runs of 1 yard and 5 yards–against Chicago's top-ranked defense.

AFC Defensive Player

Zach Thomas (LB, Dolphins) – Made 11 tackles and had an interception in victory at San Diego.

AFC Special Teams Player

Pacman Jones (KR-PR-CB, Titans) – Scored team's lone TD on 52-yard punt return and returned another punt 21 yards in win over Houston.

NFC Offensive Player

Drew Bledsoe (QB, Cowboys) – Completed 22 of 34 passes for 332 yards and three TDs, with a 126.1 passer rating, in triumph over Chiefs.

NFC Defensive Player

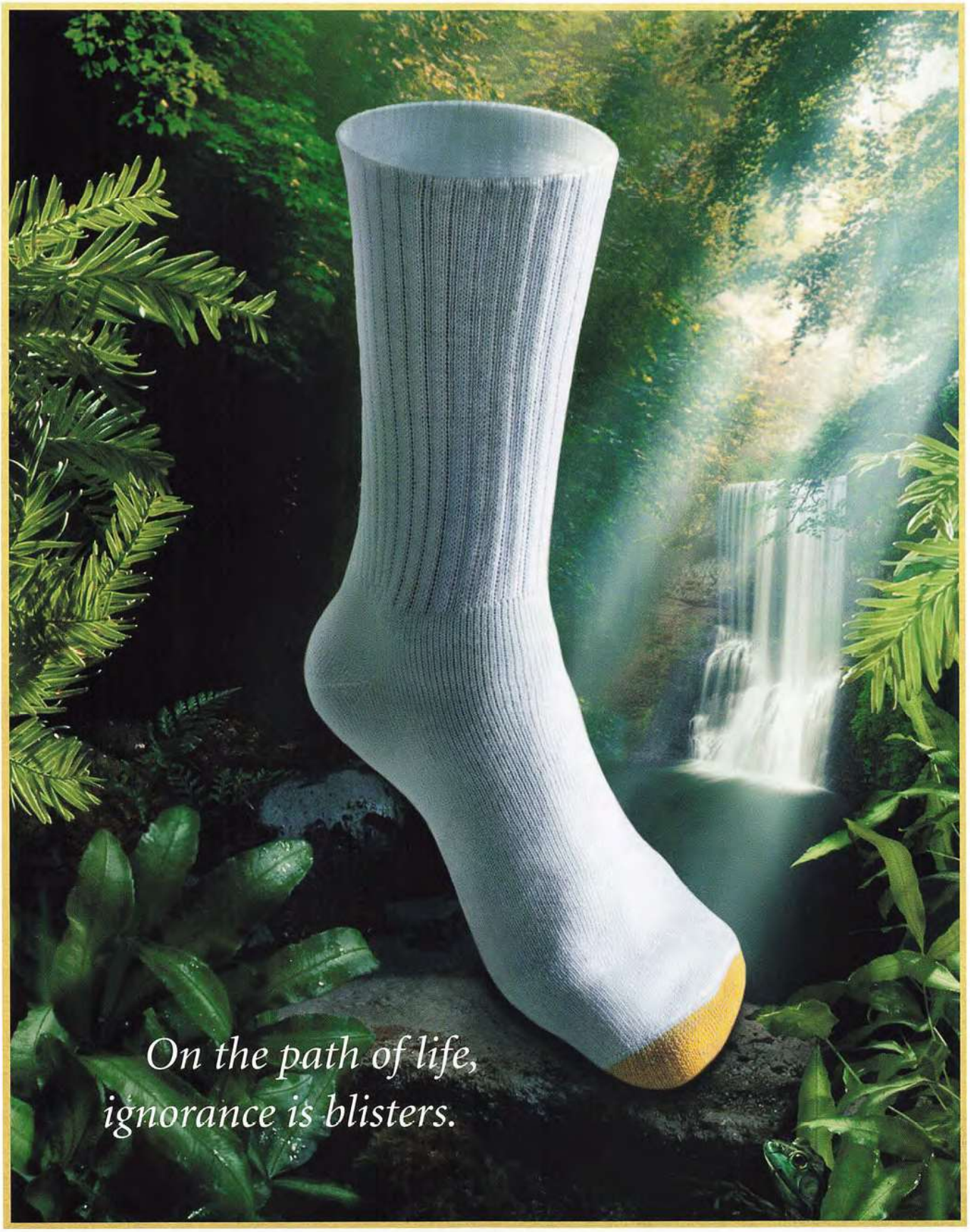
Ronde Barber (CB, Buccaneers) – Six tackles, an interception, and a sack in divisional victory over Carolina.

NFC Special Teams Player

Antonio Brown (KR, Redskins) – Scored game-winning touchdown with a 91-yard kickoff return after the Cardinals had taken a 13-10 lead.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Samkon Gado (RB, Packers) – Had third 100-yard game of year, rushing for 171 yards in win vs. Detroit.



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WEEK 15: PERFECTION PROVES ELUSIVE

THE INDIANAPOLIS COLTS' QUEST TO BECOME THE SECOND TEAM IN NFL HISTORY TO GO THROUGH AN ENTIRE SEASON UNBEATEN AND UNTIED CAME TO AN END AS THE CHARGERS PIERCED INDY'S ARMOR IN A ROLLER COASTER AFFAIR AT THE RCA DOME.

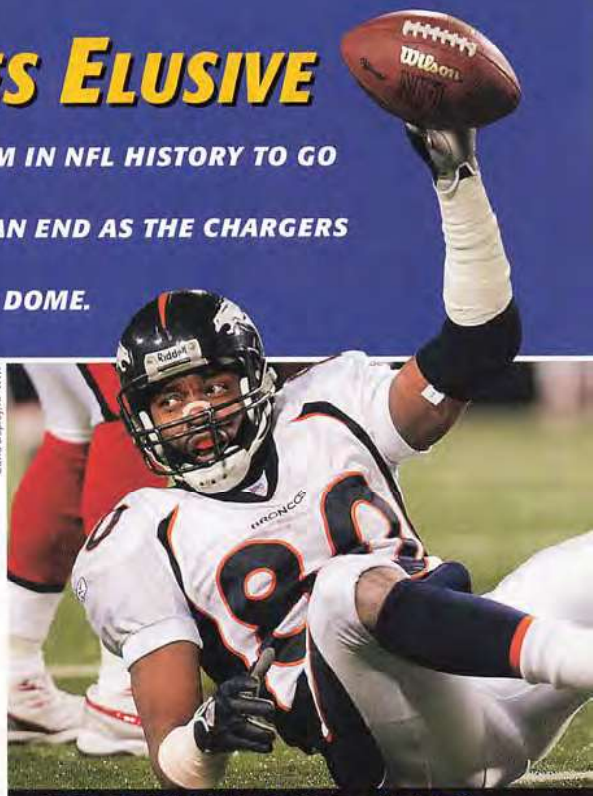
San Diego grabbed the win by scoring 10 fourth-quarter points *after the Colts had rallied from a 16-point deficit. Nate Kaeding's 49-yard field goal put the Chargers back in front and Michael Turner iced the 26-17 victory by running 83 yards for a TD with 2:09 to play. Indianapolis had been just the fourth NFL team to start a year with 13 straight wins and was the first to win each of those games by at least seven points.*

While San Diego stayed alive in the playoff hunt, three others secured postseason plans. The two-time defending Super Bowl champion Patriots clinched the AFC East by shutting out Tampa Bay, 28-0, and Cincinnati claimed the AFC North—its first division crown since 1988—by handing Detroit a 41-17 setback. Denver beat the Bills to nail down at least a Wild Card and stay two games in front in the AFC West. In the NFC, Seattle remained the lone team guaranteed of playing a game beyond New Year's Day and its 28-24 come-from-behind triumph against Tennessee wrapped up a first-round bye.

Two of the week's top performances came from players in the NFC East who helped improve their team's playoff chances. The Giants' Tiki Barber rushed for 220 yards and two TDs in a 27-17 win over Kansas City, while in Washington, Chris Cooley caught three touchdown passes as the Redskins dealt the Cowboys a 35-7 defeat.

G. Newman Lowrance/WireImage.com

◀ **HE'S IN CHARGE. Shawne Merriman was part of an outstanding defensive effort by San Diego that knocked the Colts from the ranks of the undefeated.**



David Duprey/AP WWP

▲ **HERE'S ANOTHER ONE. Rod Smith shows the ball after making one of his 11 catches during Denver's win.**

VETERAN TOUCH

The Broncos reached the playoffs for the third straight year and inched closer to the AFC West title by defeating Buffalo, 28-17. Playing a big role in the win was Rod Smith, the 11th-year wide receiver who had 11 catches for 137 yards and grabbed a second-quarter touchdown that put Denver on the board. "He's the leader of this team. He's the guy that we all feed off of," said linebacker Al Wilson, who had six tackles and a sack. Tied 7-7 at halftime, the Broncos pulled away by scoring on their first three possessions after intermission. "That [TD] drive in the second quarter and the way we came out offensively in the second half was really impressive to me," said head coach Mike Shanahan, whose team reached 11 wins for the first time since the 2000 season. "We had some lengthy drives and made some first downs." Jake Plummer completed 20 of 37 passes for 259 yards and Mike Anderson ran for 97 yards and scored Denver's final two touchdowns. With his four PATs, kicker Jason Elam reached 102 points for the year and became the first NFL player to start a career with 13 straight 100-point seasons.

"It's like trying to describe to someone what it's like to walk on the moon. It's only a description—they'll never know until they go."

— Mercury Morris explaining what it means to have played for the 1972 Dolphins, the only unbeaten, untied team in NFL history.

Leo Hallo/Wireimage.com

▲ THE BIG CAT. Head coach Marvin Lewis directed the Bengals to their first division title in 17 seasons.

Lee Coleman/Wireimage.com

▲ NOW THAT'S COOL. Washington's Chris Cooley makes one of his three TD catches during a 35-7 victory over Dallas.

Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

▲ OUT OF HIBERNATION. Playing in a game for the first time in 15 months, Rex Grossman was on target as Chicago won.

Stephen Dunn/Getty Images

▲ VERY WELL, THANK YOU. The Texans' Jonathan Wells gained 87 yards and scored twice in a win over Arizona.

Hot And Cold

A game-time temperature of 12 degrees and a minus-3 wind chill settled into Soldier Field as Chicago and Atlanta prepared for a potential playoff preview, but things warmed up once the Bears' Rex Grossman got on the field. The QB, returning to action for the first time in 15 months, entered the game in the third quarter and engineered a 16-3 win over the Falcons. "It was a thrill," said Grossman, who tore the ACL in his right knee last season and suffered a broken left ankle earlier this year. "To finally be back and have the crowd support me like that is not really something you can explain. [But] it's a memory I'll take with me the rest of my life." While Grossman's numbers were modest (9 of 16, 93 yards), he moved the offense when it mattered and kept the Falcons off balance. That allowed Thomas Jones to rush for 91 yards, including the game's only TD on a 1-yard run in the third quarter. The Bears' defense held Atlanta to 231 yards and had two interceptions, and the win gave Chicago a two-game cushion in the NFC North.

Week 15 Wonders

Several close games marked the week: Jacksonville held off the 49ers, 10-9, behind QB David Garrard, who threw for 216 yards and ran 13 yards for the game's lone TD; the Eagles got a fourth-quarter touchdown pass from Mike McMahon to Mike Bartrum to take a 17-16 win at St. Louis; and Phil Dawson kicked three FGs—the last one a 37-yarder as time expired—to lift Cleveland over Oakland, 9-7 …Seattle trailed Tennessee by 10 points late in the third quarter before Matt Hasselbeck threw TD passes to Joe Jurevicius and Darrell Jackson to pull out a 28-24 win, the Seahawks' 10th straight triumph …Sage Rosenfels' 50-yard TD pass to Marty Booker broke a fourth-quarter tie, leading the Dolphins past the Jets, 24-20…Ben Roethlisberger's 3-yard TD run put Pittsburgh ahead for good and helped snap Minnesota's six-game win streak, 18-3…Kyle Boller threw for 253 yards and three TDs, two to Todd Heap, in the Ravens' 48-3 victory over Green Bay. ■

WEEK 15

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Saturday, December 17
@ New England 28 ..... Tampa Bay 0
@ N.Y. Giants 27 ..... Kansas City 17
Denver 28 ..... @ Buffalo 17

Sunday, December 18
Carolina 27 ..... @ New Orleans 10*
Cincinnati 41 ..... @ Detroit 17
Cleveland 9 ..... @ Oakland 7
@ Houston 30 ..... Arizona 19
@ Jacksonville 10 ..... San Francisco 9
@ Miami 24 ..... N.Y. Jets 20
Philadelphia 17 ..... @ St. Louis 16
Pittsburgh 18 ..... @ Minnesota 3
San Diego 26 ..... @ Indianapolis 17
Seattle 28 ..... @ Tennessee 24
@ Washington 35 ..... Dallas 7
@ Chicago 16 ..... Atlanta 3

Monday, December 19
@ Baltimore 48 ..... Green Bay 3

*Played in Baton Rouge

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Rod Smith (WR, Broncos) – Had 31st 100-yard receiving game (the most in franchise history) with 11 catches for 137 yards and a TD in win at Buffalo.

AFC Defensive Player

Shawne Merriman (LB, Chargers) – Had two key sacks and three other tackles in victory over Indianapolis.

AFC Special Teams Player

Phil Dawson (K, Browns) – Kicked FGs from 44, 24, and 37 yards for all of team's points in win over Raiders.

NFC Offensive Player

Tiki Barber (RB, Giants) – Rushed for career-high (and franchise record) 220 yards, with TD runs of 41 and 20 yards, to help defeat Kansas City.

NFC Defensive Player

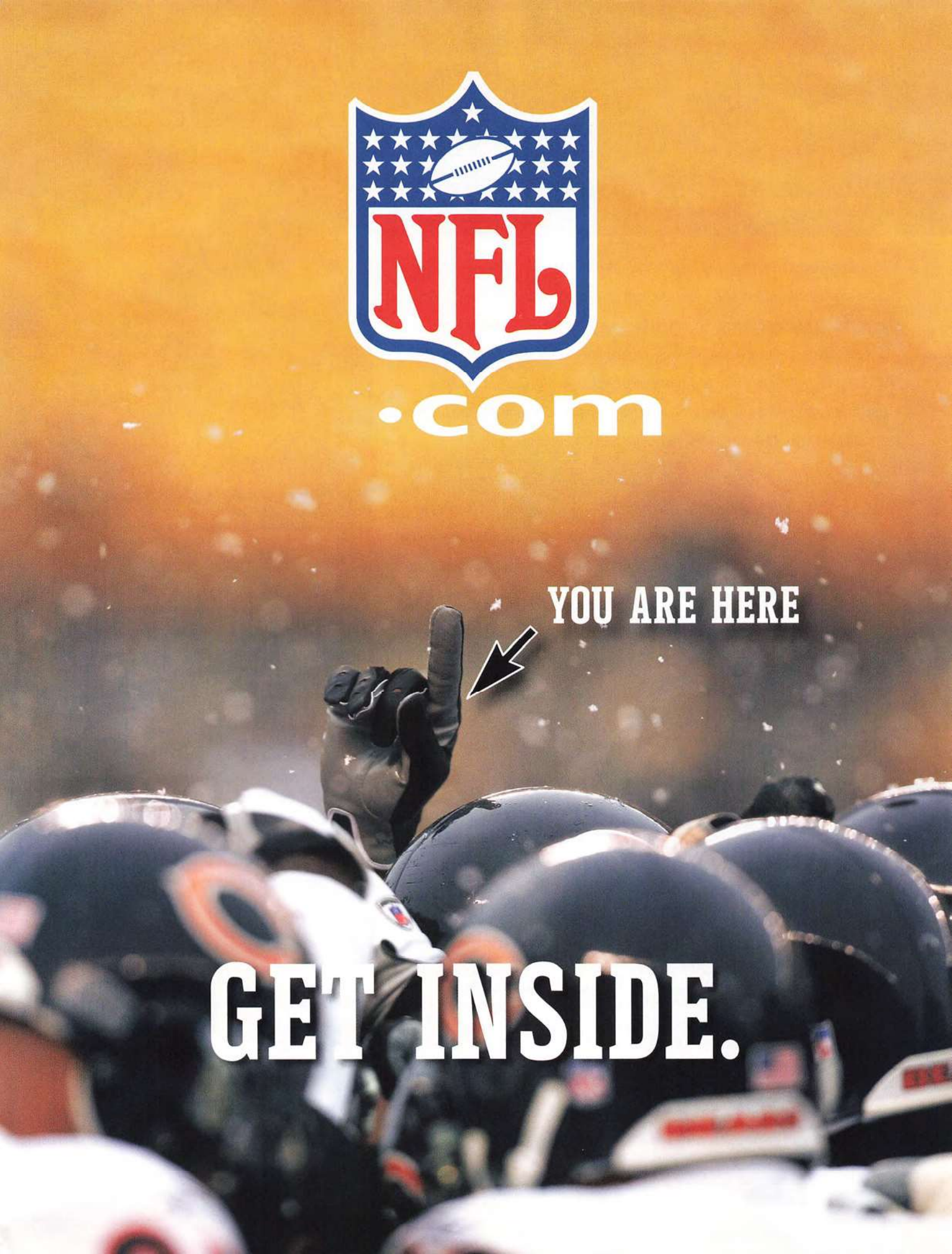
Phillip Daniels (DE, Redskins) – Had four sacks, two QB pressures, and recovered a fumble in win over Dallas.

NFC Special Teams Player

Bernard Berrian (PR, Bears) – Had a 24-yard punt return that set up the go-ahead score to beat Falcons.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Charlie Frye (QB, Browns) – Completed 21 of 32 passes for 198 yards and led a late 43-yard drive for game-winning field goal at Oakland.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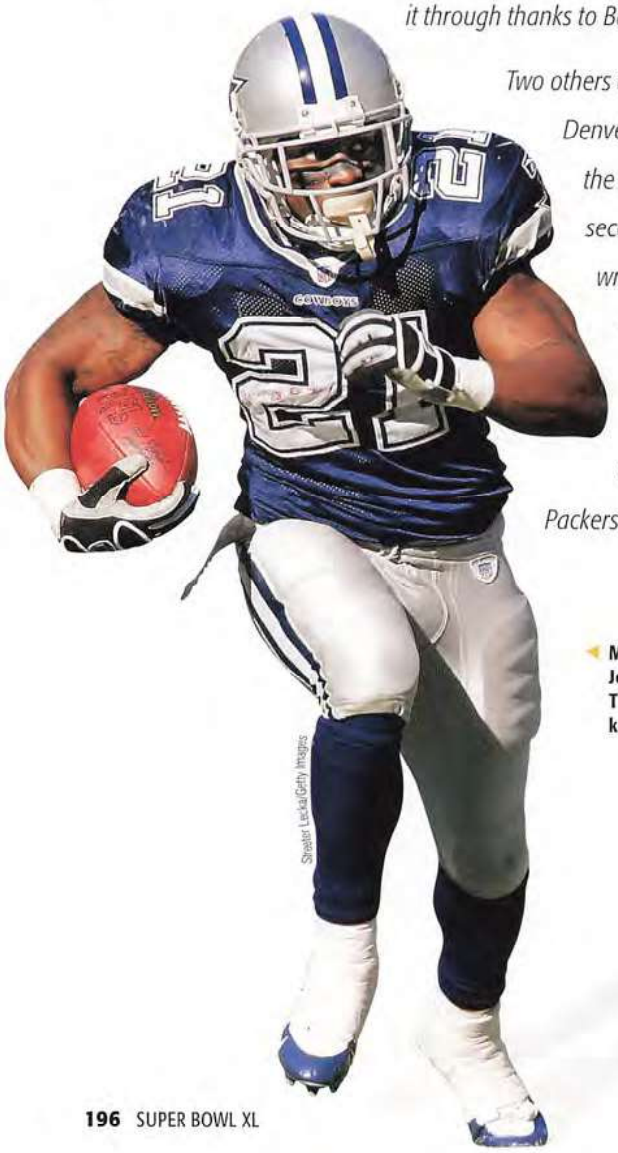
WEEK 16: STILL A PARTLY CLOUDY PICTURE

WHILE THE SEASON'S 16TH WEEK CLEARED UP MUCH OF THE POSTSEASON PICTURE, NOT EVERYTHING WAS SETTLED. TWO NFC DIVISIONS WERE STILL UP FOR GRABS AND SIX TEAMS REMAINED IN THE FIGHT FOR THE FINAL FOUR PLAYOFF BERTHS.

The holiday weekend featured two "elimination" games *with the winners staying alive and the losers being knocked from contention. In the AFC, Kansas City doused the Chargers' postseason hopes as Larry Johnson had his eighth straight 100-yard rushing game, gaining 131 yards and scoring twice in a 20-7 victory. In the NFC, Tampa Bay stunned defending conference finalist Atlanta. Cadillac Williams' 6-yard touchdown run with 25 seconds remaining tied the game and the Buccaneers won it on Matt Bryant's 41-yard field goal in the final minute of overtime.*

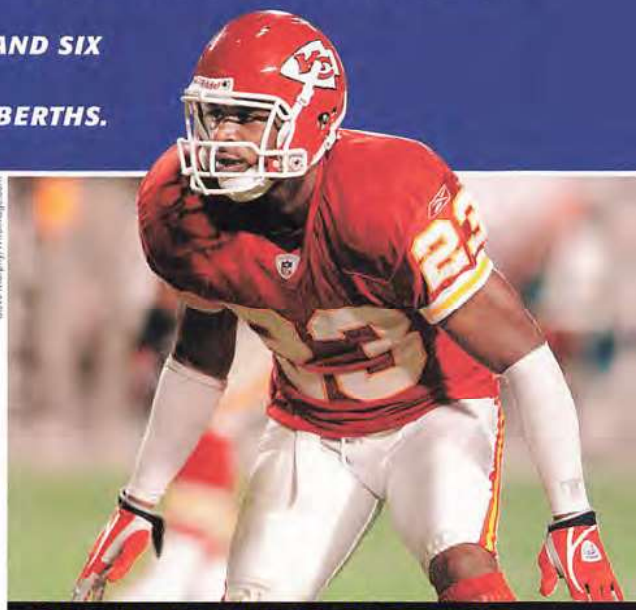
Jacksonville and the N.Y. Giants joined the playoff lineup. The Jaguars returned to the postseason for the first time since 1999, scoring three TDs in the final ten minutes to defeat Houston, 38-20. And while the Giants came up short at Washington, they made it through thanks to Baltimore's win over Minnesota.

Two others earned coveted postseason byes. Denver beat Oakland, 22-3, to secure the AFC West and the conference's second seed, while the Bears wrapped up the NFC North and avoided the Wild Card round by virtue of a 24-17 triumph at Green Bay. It marked Chicago's first sweep of the Packers since the 1991 season.



Shaelor Lacka/Getty Images

MAKING A RUN AT IT. With Julius Jones rushing for 194 yards and two TDs, the Cowboys edged Carolina to keep their playoff hopes alive.



Steve Murphy/Wirelmage.com

▲ A SUCCESS FOR CERTAIN. Patrick Surtain's seven tackles and interception lifted the Chiefs over the Chargers.

END TO AN ERA

The 555th and final telecast of ABC's *Monday Night Football* was much like the first. It opened with the voice of Howard Cosell, the late broadcaster who called games from the series' 1970 debut until 1983. It ended with a 31-21 Patriots victory over the Jets, identical to the score of that first game (when the Browns beat the Jets). Throughout the evening, the network paid tribute to the program's history, including longtime commentator Don Meredith belting out one final rendition of his signature "Turn out the lights, the party's over." The game had its share of big moments, too: the Patriots won for the sixth time in seven games as they prepared for a run at another Super Bowl; New England's Mike Vrabel, normally a linebacker, caught two touchdowns; and the Jets' Vinny Testaverde set a league record by throwing a TD pass for the 19th straight season. In 2006, *Monday Night Football* goes to ESPN.

Reuters/Wirelmage.com

"The world picked us not to be very good and we've managed to prove the world wrong quite a few times."

— Matt Bryant after his 41-yard field goal beat the Falcons and improved Tampa Bay to 10-5.

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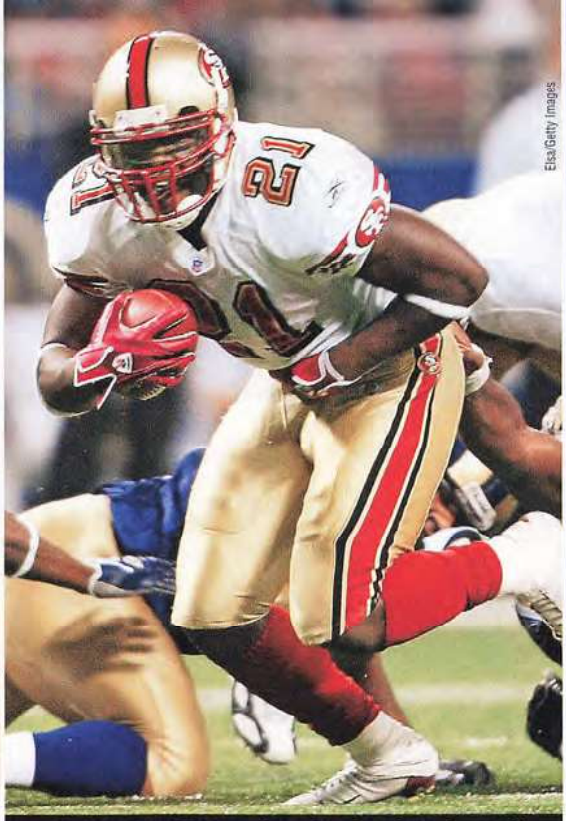
Bob Levey/WireImage.com

▲ DEL RIO GRAND. By staging a fourth-quarter rally at Houston, Jack Del Rio's Jaguars clinched a playoff berth.

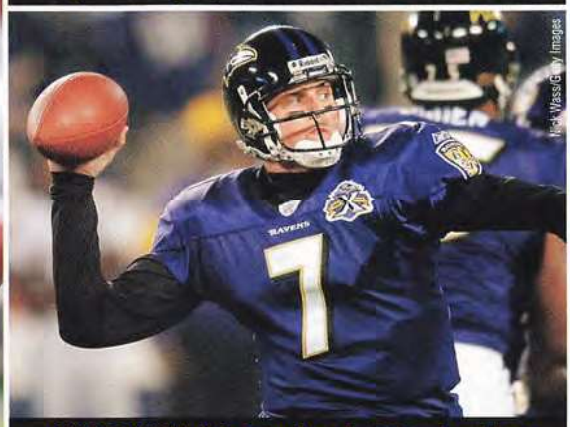
Jimmy DeFlippo/US Presswire

▲ GIVE 'EM THE BOOT. Matt Bryant's overtime FG knocked Atlanta from playoff contention and kept Tampa in the hunt.



Elsa/Getty Images

▲ FRANKLY SPEAKING. Frank Gore heads to the end zone with a game-winning 30-yard TD run in the 49ers' win at St. Louis.



Patrick Wassel/Getty Images

▲ KYLE CONNECTS. Kyle Boller threw for 289 yards and three TDs while leading the Ravens to a victory over the Vikings.

Keeping Hopes Alive

There was a bit of dominance and some drama from teams striving for the playoffs. The Steelers, looking to reach the postseason for the fourth time in five years, routed the Browns, 41-0. Ben Roethlisberger completed 13 of 20 passes for 226 yards, including a 7-yard TD pass to Hines Ward, and Jerome Bettis, Willie Parker, and Verron Haynes all ran for scores. "We made a statement," said Pittsburgh linebacker James Harrison, who blocked a punt and was part of a defense that collected eight sacks. In Washington, the Redskins stopped the Giants, 35-20, as Santana Moss caught three TD passes—from 17, 59, and 72 yards. NFC East rival Dallas kept pace by winning in Carolina, 24-20, when Terry Glenn caught a 2-yard touchdown from Drew Bledsoe with 24 seconds to play. That result prevented the Panthers from nailing down a postseason slot and dropped them into a tie with Tampa Bay for first place in the NFC South.

Week 16 Sidelights

Indianapolis played with a heavy heart as head coach Tony Dungy missed the contest at Seattle following the death of his 18-year-old son, James. Fans at Qwest Field observed a moment of silence for Dungy's family and Colts players wore black horseshoes on the back of their helmets…Ricky Williams rushed for 172 yards as Miami won for the fifth straight time, 24-10, over Tennessee…Terrence McGee became the first player in NFL history to return a kickoff and an interception for TDs in a game, leading the Bills to a 37-27 win at Cincinnati. ■

WEEK 16

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Saturday, December 24

@ Arizona 27 ..... Philadelphia 21
Buffalo 37 ..... @ Cincinnati 27
Dallas 24 ..... @ Carolina 20
@ Denver 22 ..... Oakland 3
Detroit 13 ..... @ New Orleans 12*
Jacksonville 38 ..... @ Houston 20
@ Kansas City 20 ..... San Diego 7
@ Miami 24 ..... Tennessee 10
Pittsburgh 41 ..... @ Cleveland 0
@ Tampa Bay 27 ..... Atlanta 24 (OT)
San Francisco 24 ..... @ St. Louis 20
@ Seattle 28 ..... Indianapolis 13
@ Washington 35 ..... N.Y. Giants 20

Sunday, December 25

Chicago 24 ..... @ Green Bay 17
@ Baltimore 30 ..... Minnesota 23

Monday, December 26

New England 31 ..... @ N.Y. Jets 21

**Played in San Antonio*

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Larry Johnson (RB, Chiefs) – Rushed for 131 yards and a TD and caught a touchdown pass in win over Chargers.

AFC Defensive Player

Joey Porter (LB, Steelers) – Recorded three sacks and forced a fumble in shutout of Cleveland.

AFC Special Teams Player

Terrence McGee (CB-KR, Bills) – Set a franchise record with fourth career kickoff return for a TD with 99-yarder in victory over Cincinnati.

NFC Offensive Player

Santana Moss (WR, Redskins) – Made five catches for 160 yards, including three TD grabs, in win over Giants.

NFC Defensive Player

DeMarcus Ware (LB, Cowboys) – Three sacks, each of which forced fumbles, and collected eight tackles in triumph at Carolina.

NFC Special Teams Player

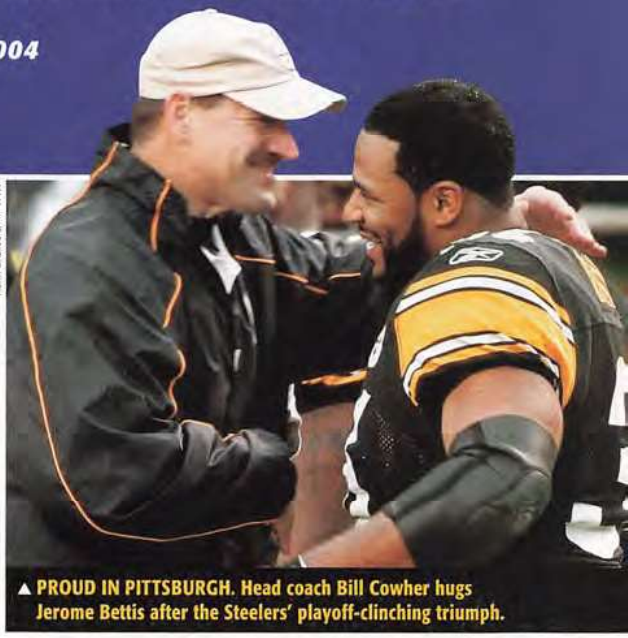
Dewayne White (DE, Buccaneers) – Blocked field goal attempt in OT and also contributed four tackles and a forced fumble in win vs. Atlanta.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

DeMarcus Ware (LB, Cowboys) – His three sacks in win at Carolina gave him seven for the season.

WEEK 17: FINISHING WITH A FLOURISH

EVERY TEAM THAT CONTROLLED ITS POSTSEASON FATE CAME THROUGH WITH A VICTORY IN WEEK 17, FILLING THE PLAYOFF FIELD WITH SEVEN NEW ENTRIES FROM 2004 AND PROVING WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR CAN MAKE.



Keith Srakocic/AP WWP

▲ **PROUD IN PITTSBURGH. Head coach Bill Cowher hugs Jerome Bettis after the Steelers' playoff-clinching triumph.**

Four of those teams—the Giants, Buccaneers, Bears, and Bengals—captured division titles this season. *The Giants clinched the NFC East with a 30-21 win at Oakland on New Year's Eve, earned behind the play of Tiki Barber (203 rushing yards) and a defense that stymied the Raiders in critical situations. Tampa Bay locked up the NFC South with a 27-13 victory over the Saints as Chris Simms threw for a pair of TDs.*

Among those playing their way into the postseason were the Redskins, who rallied for a 31-20 triumph at Philadelphia clinched by Sean Taylor's 39-yard fumble return for a score with 2:16 remaining. Carolina grabbed the NFC's other Wild Card berth with a 44-11 win at Atlanta as DeShaun Foster had 165 yards rushing and Jake Delhomme passed for two touchdowns. Pittsburgh gained the AFC's final playoff slot by defeating Detroit.

Seattle's Shaun Alexander won the league rushing title with 1,880 yards and set an NFL record with 28 touchdowns, breaking the mark of Priest Holmes with a TD in the team's game at Green Bay. Barber (1,860 yards) finished second in the NFL in rushing.

The league's most improved teams of 2005 were the Buccaneers and the NFC North champion Bears, who both added six victories to last year's win total.

BATTLING IT OUT

The Steelers and Chiefs were dueling for the AFC's second Wild Card and both teams brought their "A" game—or should that be their ground game—to the field in Week 17. In Kansas City, where head coach Dick Vermeil announced he would retire at year's end, Larry Johnson racked up 201 rushing yards on 26 carries in a 37-3 win over the Bengals. Johnson scored on runs of 49, 14, and 20 yards, helping the Chiefs' offense gain 537 total yards. But Pittsburgh had the inside track and wrapped up its 10th playoff bid in head coach Bill Cowher's 14 seasons by topping the Lions, 35-21. Jerome Bettis scored three times and his 5-yard run in the second quarter put the Steelers ahead to stay. Kansas City became just the fourth 10-6 team to miss the playoffs since 1991.

Drew Hallowell/Wirelmage.com

◀ **REACHING THEIR GOAL. Clinton Portis lunges for the end zone with the go-ahead score during Washington's win over the Eagles.**

WEEK 17 STANDINGS

*Division champion **Wild Card qualifier

AFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
New England*	10-6-0	379	338
Miami	9-7-0	318	317
Buffalo	5-11-0	271	367
N.Y. Jets	4-12-0	240	355

AFC North	W-L-T	PF	PA
Cincinnati*	11-5-0	421	350
Pittsburgh**	11-5-0	389	258
Baltimore	6-10-0	265	299
Cleveland	6-10-0	232	301

AFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Indianapolis*	14-2-0	439	247
Jacksonville**	12-4-0	361	269
Tennessee	4-12-0	299	421
Houston	2-14-0	260	431

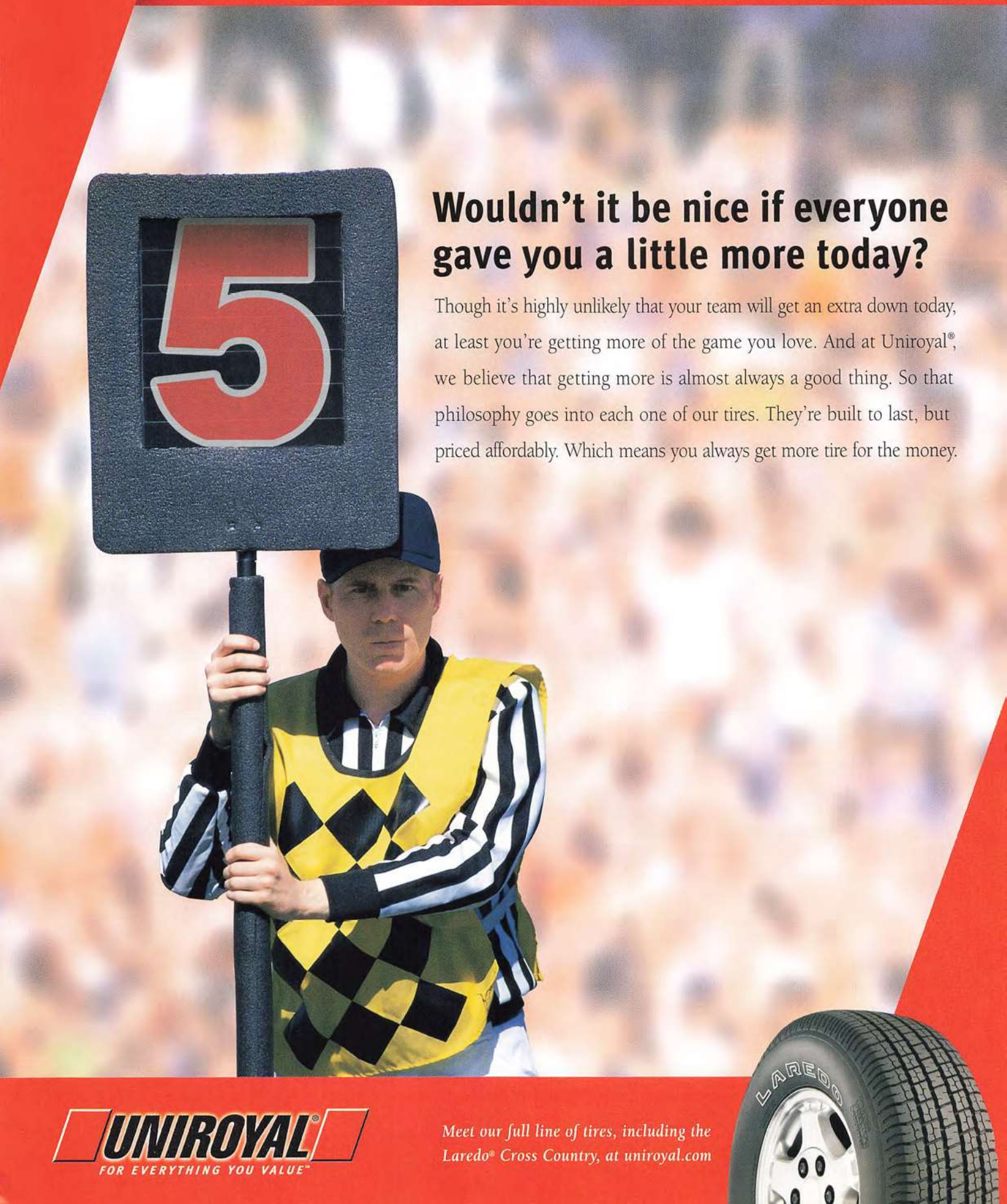
AFC West	W-L-T	PF	PA
Denver*	13-3-0	395	258
Kansas City	10-6-0	403	325
San Diego	9-7-0	418	312
Oakland	4-12-0	290	383

NFC East	W-L-T	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants*	11-5-0	422	314
Washington**	10-6-0	359	293
Dallas	9-7-0	325	308
Philadelphia	6-10-0	310	388

NFC North	W-L-T	PF	PA
Chicago*	11-5-0	260	202
Minnesota	9-7-0	306	344
Detroit	5-11-0	254	345
Green Bay	4-12-0	298	344

NFC South	W-L-T	PF	PA
Tampa Bay*	11-5-0	300	274
Carolina**	11-5-0	391	259
Atlanta	8-8-0	351	341
New Orleans	3-13-0	235	398

NFC West	W-L-T	PF	PA
Seattle*	13-3-0	452	271
St. Louis	6-10-0	363	429
Arizona	5-11-0	311	387
San Francisco	4-12-0	239	428



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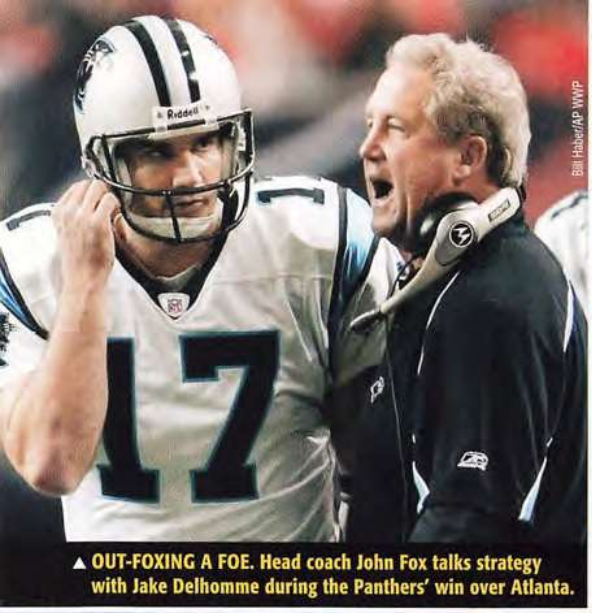

Bill Haber/AP WWP

▲ OUT-FOXING A FOE. Head coach John Fox talks strategy with Jake Delhomme during the Panthers' win over Atlanta.

Scott A. Miller/US Presswire

▲ GALLOPING TO GLORY. Joey Galloway had two TD catches as Tampa Bay slipped past the Saints to capture the NFC South.

Al Bello/Getty Images

▲ JUST FOR KICKS. Doug Flutie prepares to convert a dropkick (the NFL's first in 54 years) in the Patriots' game vs. Miami.

Winning Ways In Washington

Head coach Joe Gibbs improved to 57-18 in games played after December 1 and the Redskins reached the playoffs for the first time since 1999 by defeating the Eagles, 31-20. It wasn't all that easy, however. Mike McMahon threw a pair of early TD passes—from 33 and 8 yards—to rookie Reggie Brown as Philadelphia jumped in front, 17-7. Washington pulled within seven points on John Hall's 25-yard field goal just before halftime and, on the opening possession of the third quarter, Clinton Portis' first TD of the day tied the game. Philly reclaimed the lead, but a Lemar Marshall interception early in the fourth quarter gave the Redskins the ball at the Eagles' 22-yard line. One play later, Portis broke free around the left side for his second score to put Washington on track for its fifth straight victory. Portis rushed for 112 yards and the Redskins' defense forced six turnovers, four in the final period. "Trying to win five straight is a tough deal, but our guys seemed to understand what it would take," said Gibbs. "We went back to the basics."

Closing Comments

For the third straight season, the NFL set a paid attendance record. The league averaged 66,453 fans per game and played to more than 90 percent of stadium capacity…The AFC won the head-to-head interconference battle with the NFC, 34-30…The Cardinals' Neil Rackers set an NFL single-season mark with 40 field goals. He kicked a pair—from 28 and 42 yards—in the team's loss to the Colts. In the same game, Anquan Boldin and Larry Fitzgerald became the third set of teammates with 100 receptions in a season. Fitzgerald finished with 103, tied with Carolina's Steve Smith for the NFL lead; Boldin had 102…Ty Law's three interceptions in the Jets' 30-26 win over Buffalo gave him 10 for the year, a personal-high and a franchise record…Brett Favre reached 20 TD passes for the 12th straight season, the milestone coming on a 9-yard pass to Antonio Chapman that lifted the Packers over Seattle. ■

WEEK 17

Road to the Super Bowl

Scores

Saturday, December 31

Denver 23 ..... @ San Diego 7
N.Y. Giants 30 ..... @ Oakland 21

Sunday, January 1

Carolina 44 ..... @ Atlanta 11
@ Cleveland 20 ..... Baltimore 16
@ Green Bay 23 ..... Seattle 17
@ Indianapolis 17 ..... Arizona 13
@ Jacksonville 40 ..... Tennessee 13
@ Kansas City 37 ..... Cincinnati 3
Miami 28 ..... @ New England 26
@ Minnesota 34 ..... Chicago 10
@ N.Y. Jets 30 ..... Buffalo 26
@ Pittsburgh 35 ..... Detroit 21
@ San Francisco 20 ..... Houston 17 (OT)
@ Tampa Bay 27 ..... New Orleans 13
Washington 31 ..... @ Philadelphia 20
St. Louis 20 ..... @ Dallas 10

Awards

AFC Offensive Player

Larry Johnson (RB, Chiefs) – Had ninth straight 100-yard game, rushing for 201 yards and scoring three times in victory over Cincinnati.

AFC Defensive Player

John Lynch (S, Broncos) – Forced two fumbles that led to Denver scores and added five tackles and two sacks to help beat San Diego.

AFC Special Teams Player

Doug Flutie (QB-K, Patriots) – Successfully executed NFL's first drop kick since 1941 with an extra point in fourth quarter against Miami.

NFC Offensive Player

Tiki Barber (RB, Giants) – Rushed for 203 yards, highlighted by a 95-yard TD run, and caught six passes in win at Oakland that clinched NFC East.

NFC Defensive Player

Simeon Rice (DE, Buccaneers) – Two sacks, and four tackles overall, in win over Saints to secure NFC South title.

NFC Special Teams Player

Mike Sellers (TE, Redskins) – Recovered a muffed punt and caught 4-yard TD pass on ensuing drive that contributed to win at Philadelphia.

Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie

Charlie Frye (QB, Browns) – Completed 22 of 38 passes for 199 yards and a TD in victory over Ravens.

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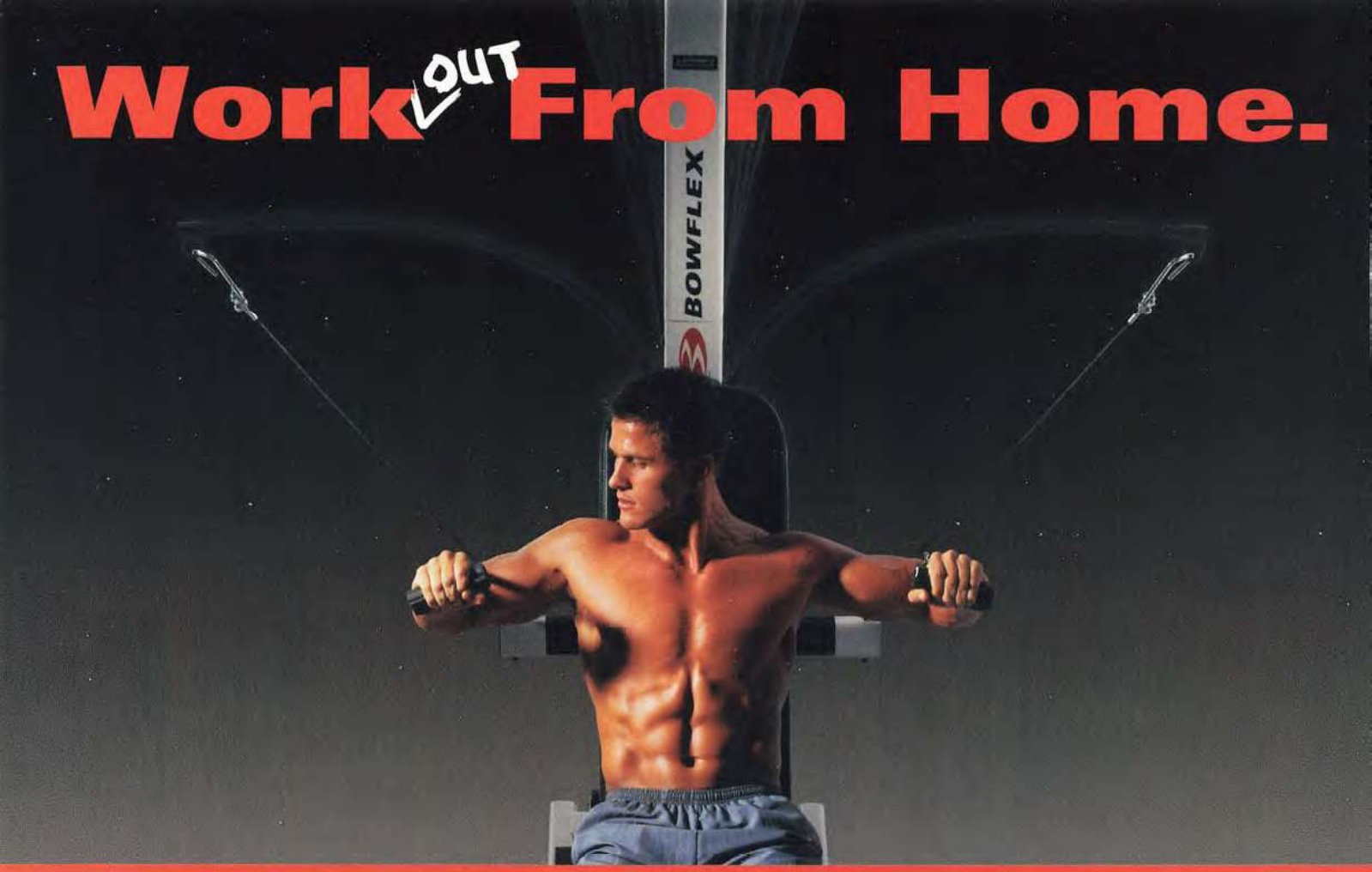

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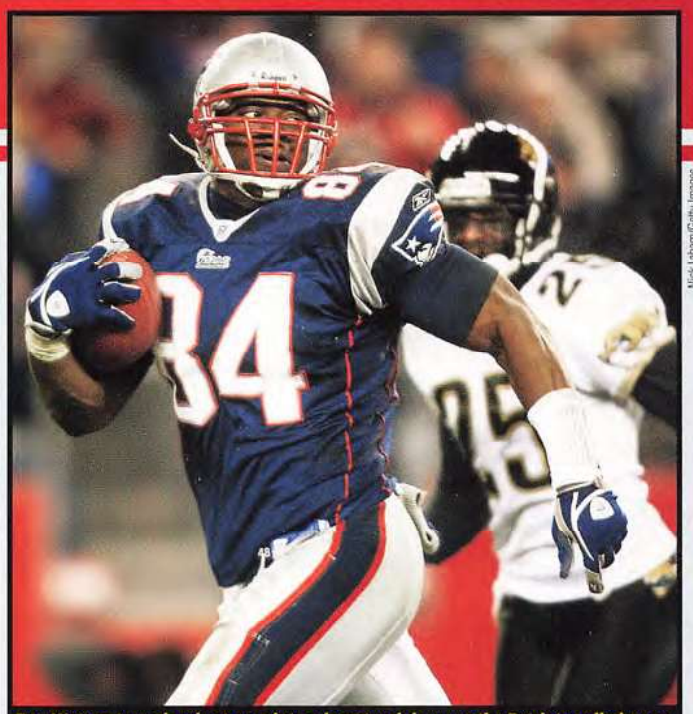
AFC Wild Card Playoffs

@ NEW ENGLAND 28, JACKSONVILLE 3



Nick Laham/Getty Images

Ben Watson turned a short pass into a long touchdown as the Patriots pulled away.

Some may have wondered if the Patriots could make a charge at a third straight Super Bowl. But after they dismantled the Jaguars, the doubters were few.

With Tom Brady throwing three TD passes and its defense keeping Jacksonville out of the end zone, New England looked much like the team that won the past two Super Bowl titles.

The win was the Patriots' 10th straight in the postseason and gave them sole possession of the NFL record they had shared with Green Bay. Willie McGinest set a mark of his own for career playoff sacks. He had four-and-a-half in the triumph, pushing his all-time total to 16.

After a scoreless first quarter, New England got on the board when Brady (15 of 27, 201 yards) found Troy Brown free in the end zone for an 11-yard TD with 12:08 remaining in the half. Jacksonville sliced into the margin before intermission on Josh Scobee's 36-yard field goal.

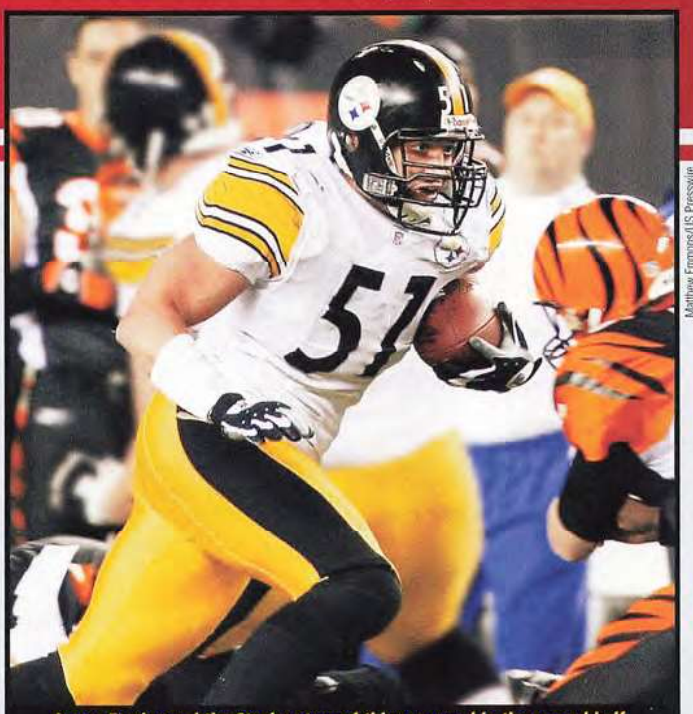
In an eight-minute span of the second half, the host Patriots blew the game wide open. David Givens scored on a three-yard throw from Brady and tight end Ben Watson turned a short pass on 3rd-and-13 into a 63-yard touchdown that made it 21-3.

"That was a great effort by Benjamin to break those tackles," said Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, who improved his postseason record to 11-1. "He made a big play out of what probably should have been a third-down stop."

Then, in the opening moments of the final period, cornerback Asante Samuel dispelled any lingering hopes for a Jaguars' rally, grabbing an interception and racing 71 yards for the game's final points.

Kevin Faulk led the Patriots' running attack with 51 yards. ■

PITTSBURGH 31, @ CINCINNATI 17



Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

James Farrior and the Steelers turned things around in the second half.

Trailing by 10 points in the second quarter, the Steelers rallied to overpower the Bengals and capture this Wild Card contest between AFC North rivals.

Pittsburgh closed out the game with 24 unanswered points, highlighted by a 43-yard touchdown toss by Ben Roethlisberger off a trick play.

The game took an unexpected turn on Cincinnati's second play from scrimmage when quarterback Carson Palmer was sidelined with a knee injury. Jon Kitna stepped up in his place and staked the hosts to a 17-7 lead as Shayne Graham hit a 23-yard FG, Rudi Johnson scored on a 20-yard run, and T.J. Houshmandzadeh caught a seven-yard touchdown pass.

But it was all Steelers from there. Roethlisberger's five-yard TD throw to Hines Ward made it a three-point game at halftime and, after the Bengals botched a field goal attempt on their first possession of the third quarter, Jerome Bettis ran for a five-yard score that gave Pittsburgh its first lead of the game.

The dagger came less than three minutes later. Receiver Antwaan Randle El took a direct snap from center and sprinted out to the right before turning and throwing a lateral across the field to Roethlisberger (14 of 19, 208 yards). The Steelers' QB caught the ball, then fired a pass to a wide open Cedric Wilson to make it 28-17.

"Last year, everything was new to Ben," said Ward, who had his fifth straight playoff game with a TD reception. "Tonight, he was pretty crisp. The intangibles that he brings I like a lot."

James Farrior's fourth-quarter interception set up Pittsburgh's final score, a 21-yard Jeff Reed field goal. ■

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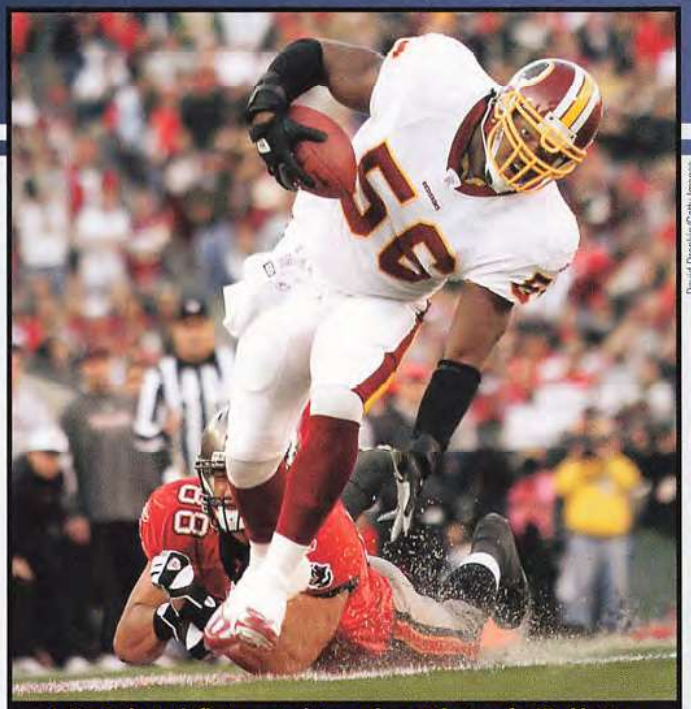
NFC Wild Card Playoffs

WASHINGTON 17, @ TAMPA BAY 10



David Drapkin/Getty Images

LaVar Arrington's first-quarter interception set the tone for Washington.

Back in the playoffs for the first time since 1999, the Redskins extended their stay by slipping past the Buccaneers in a defensive struggle.

Despite amassing just 120 yards on offense—the lowest total by any team to win an NFL playoff game—Washington got all the help it needed from an aggressive and opportunistic defense that forced a pair of first-quarter turnovers.

Six minutes into the game, the Redskins' LaVar Arrington returned an interception 21 yards to the Tampa Bay six. One play later, Clinton Portis pushed his way into the end zone for the game's first touchdown. On the Bucs' next drive, Marcus Washington forced a fumble that teammate Sean Taylor picked up and returned 51 yards for another score and a 14-0 lead.

The teams exchanged field goals before the half—Matt Bryant's 43-yarder putting Tampa on the board and the Redskins' John Hall answering with a 47-yard kick. The Bucs closed the gap on their first drive after intermission, getting within 17-10 on a seven-play, 51-yard march capped by Chris Simms' two-yard touchdown run.

But those would be the final points by either team. Late in the fourth quarter, Tampa appeared to tie things up on a 35-yard Simms-to-Edell Shepherd TD pass, but the ball came loose as the receiver landed in the end zone. Another threat ended on downs at the Redskins' 19.

"This is great," said Washington QB Mark Brunell. "We've played our best football in December, and to get a playoff win on the road is very difficult to do. Our defense was incredible. You can't say enough about them. They won the game for us." ■

CAROLINA 23, @ N.Y. GIANTS 0

Al Bello/Getty Images

The running of DeShaun Foster (151 yards) contributed to Carolina's success.

The Panthers began their mission to return to the Super Bowl for the second time in three years by overwhelming the host Giants.

DeShaun Foster rushed for 151 yards, Steve Smith scored twice, and the Carolina defense picked off Eli Manning three times.

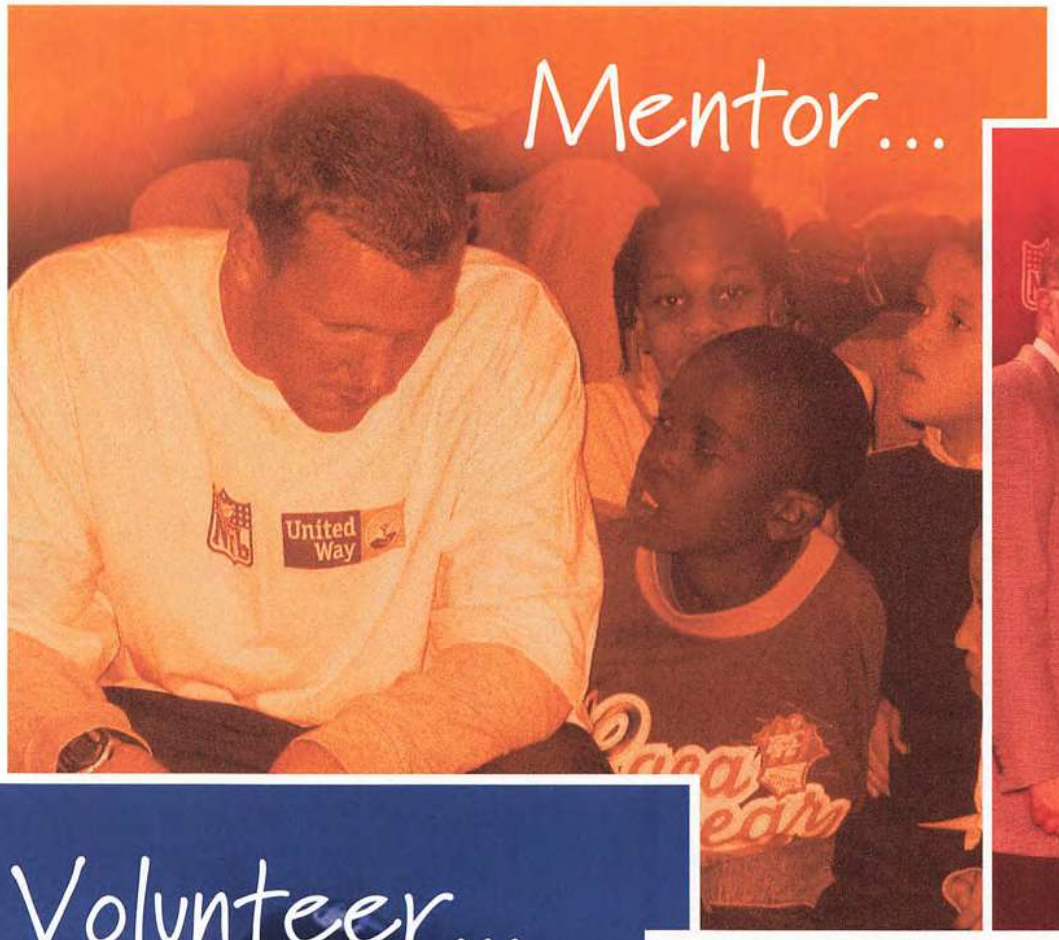
The Panthers opened the scoring in the first quarter with a time-consuming 12-play drive culminated with Smith's 22-yard touchdown catch from Jake Delhomme. It stayed that way until just before halftime, when the Panthers' Dante Wesley recovered a muffed punt deep in Giants territory. Although the offense couldn't pick up a first down, Carolina managed a 32-yard John Kasay field goal that made it 10-0.

Early in the third quarter, a Ken Lucas interception set up Smith for another score, this one on a 12-yard reverse to push the lead to 17 points. Kasay then added fourth-quarter field goals from 45 and 18 yards to account for the final margin.

"I don't think they thought we would really run the ball against them, but we established it early," said Foster, who posted his third 100-yard game of the season. "It was just wide open. I got right to the second level, early. If I can get to the second level, I can make things happen."

Nick Goings added 63 rushing yards, Smith made 10 receptions, and Delhomme finished the day 15 of 22 for 140 yards. On defense, Carolina surrendered just nine first downs and gave up 132 total yards.

The performance provided for a nice return by Carolina head coach John Fox, who spent five seasons as the Giants' defensive coordinator before taking over the Panthers in 2002. ■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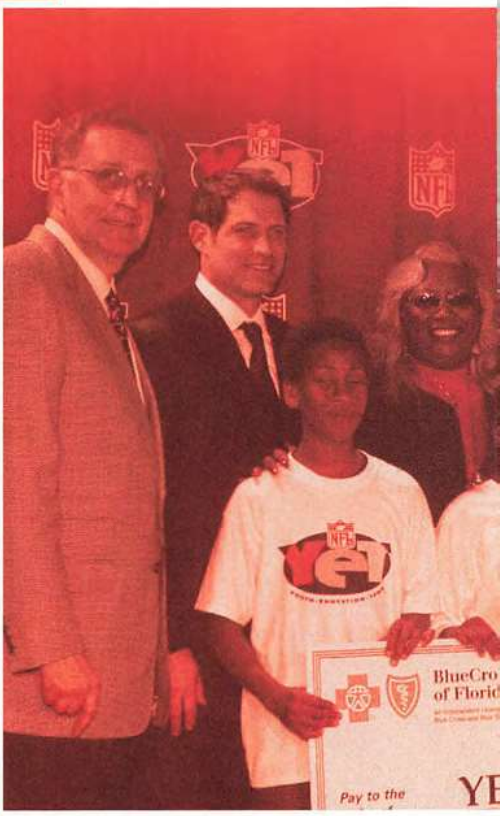
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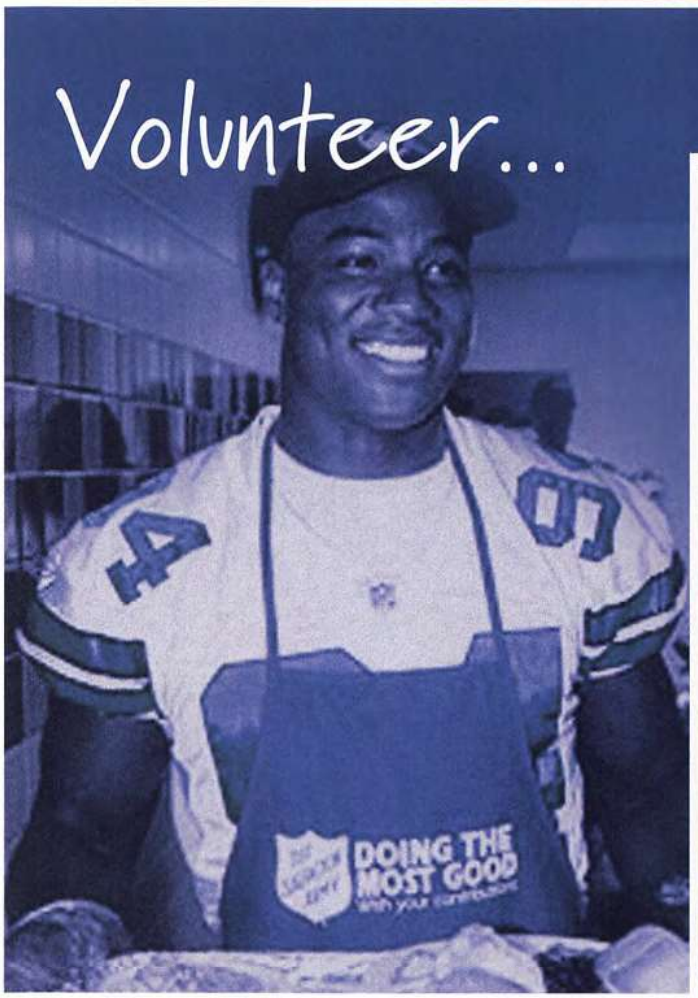
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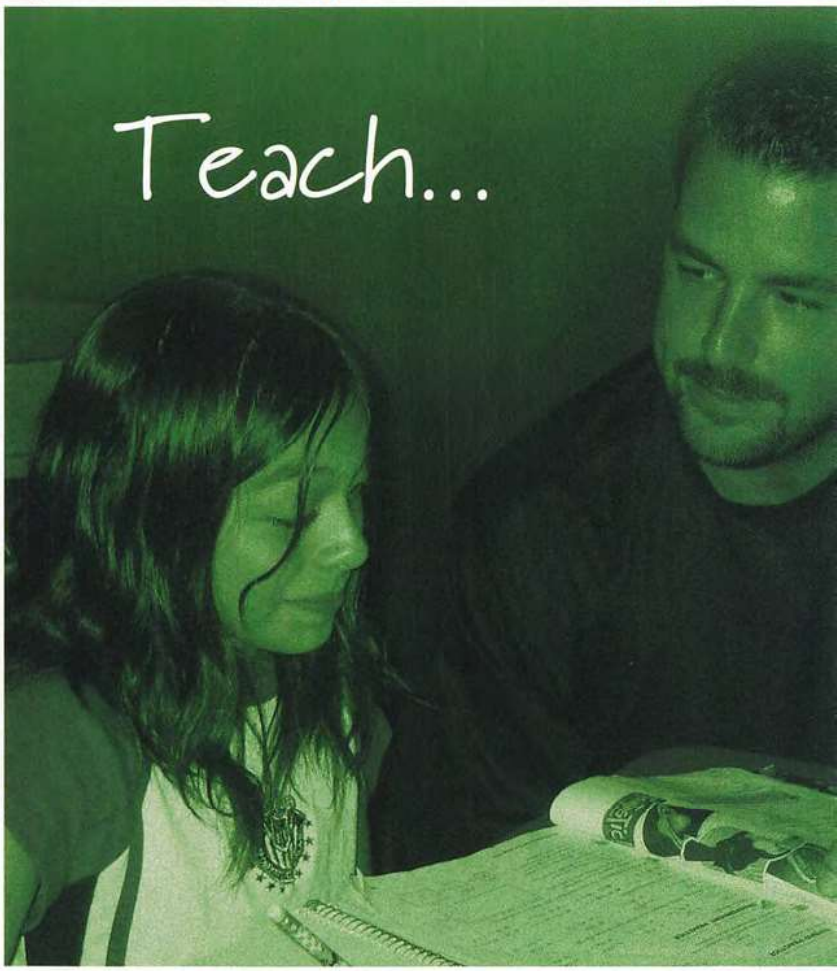
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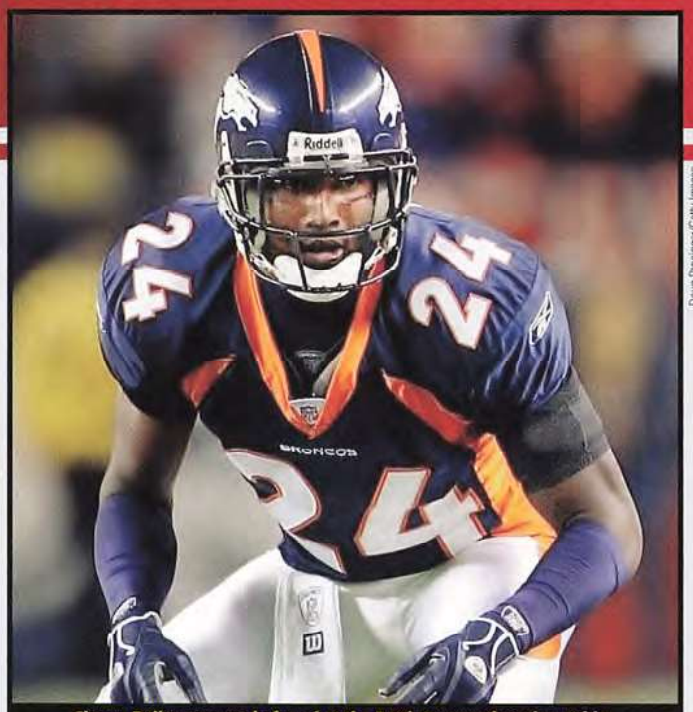
AFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

@ DENVER 27, NEW ENGLAND 13



Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

Champ Bailey was ready for what the Patriots were throwing at him.

Champ Bailey's end zone interception swung momentum to the Broncos as they knocked the two-time defending champions from the playoff field.

Bailey's third-quarter pickoff ended up being the most important of the five turnovers forced by Denver's defense and special teams. With New England deep in Broncos territory and poised to retake the lead, he stepped in front of a Tom Brady pass and returned it all the way to the Patriots' one-yard line before being pushed out of bounds.

"That was the turning point of the game," said Denver head coach Mike Shanahan. "It was a big-time play by a great player. And great players make great plays at the right times."

Moments later, Mike Anderson raced over the goal line for his second touchdown of the night, giving the Broncos a 17-6 advantage and putting them on course for their first playoff triumph since beating Atlanta in Super Bowl XXXIII.

The sequence also summed up things for New England, which was attempting to win its 11th straight postseason game in a bid to capture an unprecedented third consecutive Super Bowl title.

Adam Vinatieri's 40-yard field goal had given the Patriots a 3-0 lead and they were on the move again just before halftime. But running back Kevin Faulk fumbled and the Broncos' Ian Gold fell on the loose ball. Following a pass interference call, Anderson ran one yard for his first TD. New England then fumbled away the ensuing kickoff, which Denver converted into a 50-yard Jason Elam field goal and a 10-3 halftime lead.

In the fourth quarter, another Patriots fumble led to a four-yard Jake Plummer touchdown throw to Rod Smith that made it a 24-6 game. ■

PITTSBURGH 21, @ INDIANAPOLIS 18

Don Larson/Wirelmage.com

Ben Roethlisberger's tackle of Nick Harper saved Pittsburgh's season.

The Steelers came out flying against the Colts, then hung on to win and become the first No. 6 seed to advance to a conference championship game.

It was 14-0 before the game was 12 minutes old as Pittsburgh scored on two of its first three possessions. Still, it all came down to the final moments after an amazing chain of events gave Indianapolis one last opportunity for victory.

Antwaan Randle El capped the Steelers' opening drive—a 10-play, 84-yard march—with a six-yard TD catch from Ben Roethlisberger and that was quickly followed by Heath Miller's seven-yard scoring grab.

The Colts engineered a 96-yard second-quarter drive, taking nearly 10 minutes off the clock, but all they could muster was Mike Vanderjagt's 20-yard field goal. The lone score in the third quarter came on Jerome Bettis' short touchdown run that extended Pittsburgh's lead to 21-3.

Then came a wild fourth quarter. Peyton Manning found Dallas Clark for a 50-yard scoring strike and Edgerrin James had a four-yard TD run. After a two-point conversion, the Colts were within 21-18.

Pittsburgh appeared to have fought off the challenge by sacking Manning on fourth down at the Colts' two-yard line with 1:20 to play. But with the Steelers looking to punch in another TD, Bettis fumbled and defensive back Nick Harper scooped up the loose ball. He found running room and would have scored if not for Roethlisberger's diving tackle at the Steelers' 42. The Colts moved into field goal range, but Vanderjagt's 46-yard attempt missed, preserving Pittsburgh's triumph.

"It went from an all-time high to an all-time low back to an all-time high," said Steelers receiver Hines Ward. ■

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NFC Divisional Playoffs

@ Seattle 20, Washington 10

Darrell Jackson and the Seahawks pulled one game closer to the Super Bowl.

Kevin Terrell/Wirelmage.com

The NFC West champions were efficient on both sides of the ball as they dismissed the Redskins to pull within one game of their first Super Bowl appearance.

It marked Seattle's first playoff victory in 21 years, ending the longest drought by any NFL team, and advanced them to the conference championship game for the second time in franchise history.

Defenses ruled early on as there were nine straight three-and-outs before the Redskins drove into position for John Hall's 26-yard field goal with 8:59 to go before halftime. But the Seahawks took a 7-3 lead into the locker room when Matt Hasselbeck found Darrell Jackson (nine receptions, 143 yards) open for a 29-yard touchdown.

Hasselbeck scored himself in the third quarter, racing in from six yards to complete an 81-yard drive, and Josh Brown kicked a 33-yard field goal early in the final frame to make it a 14-point game.

The Redskins wouldn't go quietly, however. Santana Moss' 20-yard TD reception closed the gap to 17-10 and Hall recovered a Seahawks' fumble on the ensuing kickoff, but then misfired on a 36-yard FG attempt that would have cut the deficit to four. Brown, meanwhile, hit a 31-yard field goal with 2:54 to play for the game's final points.

Seattle's victory came despite the loss of league MVP Shaun Alexander, knocked out of the game with a concussion.

"I told Matt at halftime that he had to shoulder the load," said Seahawks head coach Mike Holmgren. "We always put a lot on his shoulders, but I told him that now he had to do a little bit more."

The QB answered the challenge, finishing 16 of 26 for 215 yards and no interceptions. He completed passes to six different receivers. ■

Carolina 29, @ Chicago 21

Steve Smith was the star as the Panthers pounded the Bears' vaunted defense.

Al Messerschmidt/Wirelmage.com

With two defensively-focused teams on the field, the last thing anyone expected was a shootout. But that's exactly what transpired as the Panthers outpointed the Bears.

The tone was set on the game's second play when Jake Delhomme launched a 50-yard bomb to Steve Smith for a touchdown and a quick 7-0 Carolina lead.

In the second quarter, the Panthers' John Kasay kicked three field goals—from 20, 38, and 37 yards—while the Bears countered with Adrian Peterson's one-yard TD run, making it 16-7 at the half.

The teams traded touchdowns in the third and fourth quarters, with Chicago twice getting within two points. Rex Grossman had a one-yard scoring throw to Desmond Clark to make it 16-14, before Delhomme and Smith hooked up for their second touchdown of the game—this time from 39 yards.

Jason McKie scored on a three-yard run with 12:23 to play to draw the Bears back within 23-21, but Delhomme (24 of 33, 319 yards) answered with a seven-play, 62-yard drive capped by a short TD to Kris Mangum. Kasay missed the extra point to keep it a one-score game, but the Panthers thwarted the Bears on their final three possessions, including an interception by Ken Lucas with 2:27 to play.

Smith ended the day with 12 catches for a career-best 218 yards, the fourth-highest total in NFL playoff history. Teammate DeShaun Foster rushed for 54 yards before leaving the game with a broken ankle.

"All we've got to do is keep plugging," Smith said after the Panthers became the third No. 5 seed to reach a conference title game. "Guys have to step it up and I think they will." ■

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1 Which current NFL division is the home to the most Super Bowl champions?

2 Who is the only player to appear in a Super Bowl in three different decades?

3 Which of these four players was never voted MVP of a Super Bowl?
Lynn Swann; Roger Craig; Marcus Allen; Mark Rypien

4 What team has made the most Super Bowl appearances?

5 Entering 2005, what seven current NFL teams had never made the Super Bowl.

6 Who is the only person to play in both the World Series and the Super Bowl?

7 What was the halftime score of Super Bowl IX between the Steelers and Vikings?

8 Three of the following players have scored three touchdowns in a Super Bowl game. Who doesn't belong?
Terrell Davis; Roger Craig; Ricky Watters; Franco Harris

Rick Stewart/Getty Images

Matt Bahr

9 What facility hosted the first Super Bowl played indoors?

10 Name the only teams to square off in back-to-back Super Bowls.

11 Who scored the tie-breaking TD with under two minutes remaining that gave St. Louis a 23-16 victory over Tennessee in Super Bowl XXXIV?

12 What team snapped the NFC's run of 13 consecutive Super Bowl victories?

13 Who is the last defensive player to be named Super Bowl MVP?

14 Name the only two teams to appear in more than two consecutive Super Bowls.

15 Where was Super Bowl I played?

16 What city has served as the host for the most Super Bowls?

17 What's the northern-most city to host a Super Bowl?

18 Who scored the go-ahead touchdown for the Patriots in the fourth quarter of their Super Bowl XXXIX win over the Eagles?

19 Who is the only player to intercept three passes in a Super Bowl?

20 Joe Montana threw 122 passes in his four Super Bowl appearances. How many times was he intercepted?

21 What team scored the fewest points while winning a Super Bowl?

22 Who is the last player to return a kickoff for a touchdown in a Super Bowl?

23 Who threw the L.A. Rams' TD pass in their Super Bowl XIV loss to the Steelers?

AP WWP

Marcus Allen

24 Who caught two touchdown passes 18 seconds apart to help Dallas pull away from Buffalo in Super Bowl XXVII?

25 Of the 17 teams that have won at least one Super Bowl, five of them own perfect Super Bowl records. Name those teams.

26 Who owns the single-game Super Bowl record with three sacks?

27 Which was the first Wild Card team to win the Super Bowl?

28 Most people remember the Bills' Scott Norwood missing his field goal attempt at the end of Super Bowl XXV. But who kicked the 21-yard field goal that accounted for the Giants' winning points?

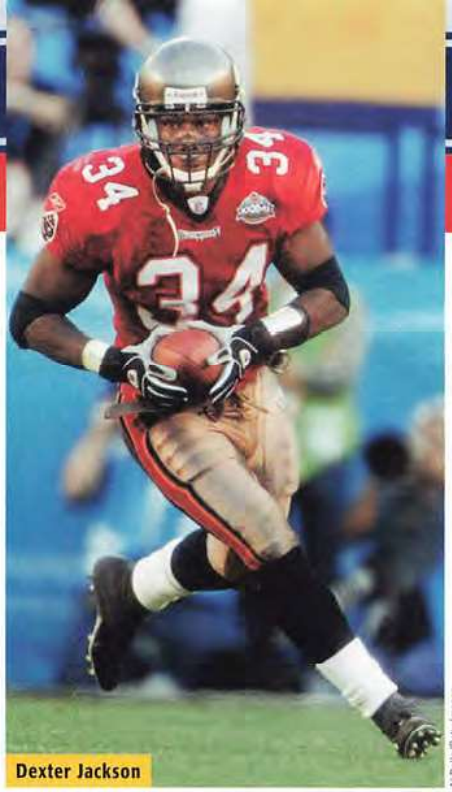
29 What head coach had the longest span between Super Bowl appearances?

30 What team scored the most points while losing in the Super Bowl?

31 Jerry Rice holds the record for career Super Bowl receptions with 33. Which of these players is second on that list?
Andre Reed; Lynn Swann; John Stallworth; Michael Irvin

32 Who coached the Jets to their "upset" victory over the Colts in Super Bowl III?

continued on next page



Dexter Jackson

Al Bello/Getty Images

Tom Brady

Doug Mills/AP WWP

33 Who quarterbacked the Ravens to victory in Super Bowl XXXV?

34 The Packers' Max McGee caught four passes the entire 1966 regular season. How many catches did he have in Super Bowl I?

35 Which of the following teams has not lost four Super Bowl games?
Miami; Minnesota; Denver; Buffalo

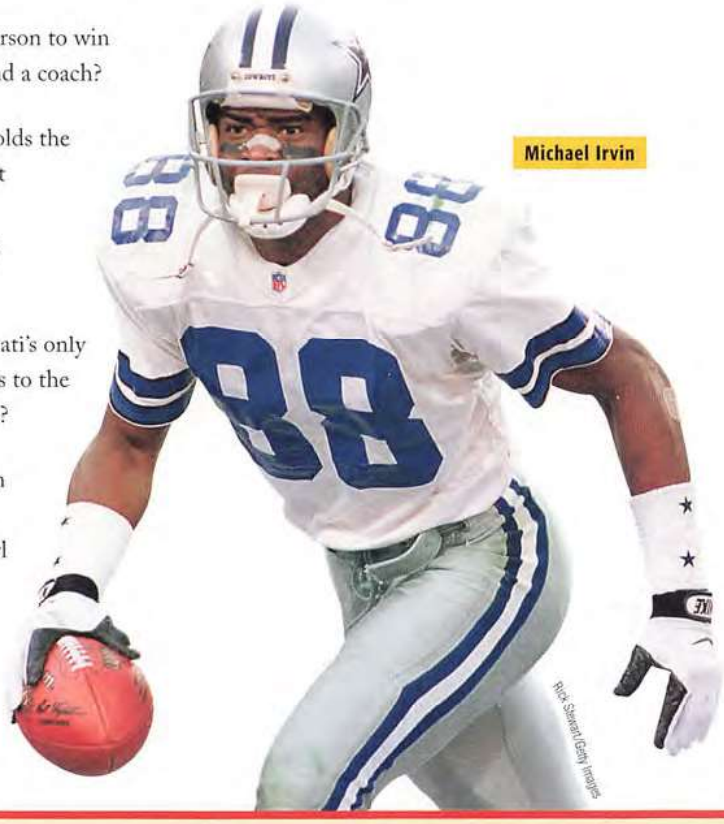
36 Who was the first person to win a Super Bowl as a player and a coach?

37 What quarterback holds the Super Bowl record for most completions in a game?
Joe Montana; Phil Simms; Joe Namath; Tom Brady

38 Who scored Cincinnati's only touchdown in its 20-16 loss to the 49ers in Super Bowl XXIII?

39 Only once has a team failed to score at least one touchdown in a Super Bowl game. Name that team.

40 Who is the only player to win Super Bowl rings with three different teams?



Michael Irvin

Rick Stewart/Getty Images

ANSWERS

1. NFC East (10). Dallas has won five Super Bowl titles, Washington has won three, and the Giants have won two.
2. Gene Upshaw, as a member of the Raiders in Super Bowls II (1968), XI (1977), and XV (1981).
3. Roger Craig. Although he played on three championship teams with the 49ers in the 1980s, he was never MVP.
4. Dallas Cowboys, 8. The Cowboys last appearance was in Super Bowl XXX, a 27-17 victory over Pittsburgh.
5. Arizona, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Jacksonville, New Orleans, Seattle.
6. Deion Sanders. Sanders was part of the 1992 Braves that lost to the Blue Jays in the World Series, before winning back-to-back Super Bowl rings as a member of the 49ers (Super Bowl XXIX) and Cowboys (Super Bowl XXX).
7. The Steelers led, 2-0, at halftime of Super Bowl IX.
8. Franco Harris. Davis had three TDs for Denver in Super Bowl XXXII; Craig scored three times for the 49ers in Super Bowl XIX; Watters did it for the 49ers in Super Bowl XXIX.
9. The Louisiana Superdome. It was the site of Super Bowl XII between Dallas and Denver.
10. Dallas and Buffalo met in Super Bowls XXVII and XXVIII. The Cowboys won both games.
11. Isaac Bruce, on a 73-yard pass from Kurt Warner.
12. Denver Broncos. The Broncos beat Green Bay, 31-24, in Super Bowl XXXII.
13. Dexter Jackson, Tampa Bay. He had two interceptions in a 48-21 win over the Raiders in Super Bowl XXXVII.
14. The Buffalo Bills appeared in four straight Super Bowls, while the Miami Dolphins played in three straight.
15. Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles.
16. New Orleans, 9. However, with Miami scheduled to host Super Bowls XLI and XLIV, it will move into first place with 10 games hosted.
17. Minneapolis. Washington's 37-24 win over Buffalo in Super Bowl XXVI was played at the Metrodome.
18. Corey Dillon on a two-yard run.
19. Rod Martin. He picked off three passes for the Raiders in their 27-10 win over the Eagles in Super Bowl XV.
20. While Montana threw 11 touchdowns in Super Bowl play, he never was intercepted.
21. Miami Dolphins, 14. The Dolphins beat the Redskins, 14-7, in Super Bowl VII to cap their undefeated 1972 season.
22. The Ravens' Jermaine Lewis, who returned a kickoff 84 yards for a TD against the Giants in Super Bowl XXXV. Interestingly, that play came only seconds after Ron Dixon returned a kickoff 97 yards for a New York touchdown.
23. Lawrence McCutcheon, on a 24-yard pass to Ronnie Smith.
24. Michael Irvin caught 19-yard and 18-yard TD passes from Troy Aikman, helping Dallas take a 28-10 halftime lead.
25. The 49ers are a perfect 5-0 in Super Bowl play. The Ravens, Bears, Jets, and Buccaneers are all 1-0.
26. Reggie White of the Packers had three sacks against New England in Super Bowl XXXI.
27. The 1980 Oakland Raiders. The Raiders defeated Houston, Cleveland, and San Diego in the AFC playoffs, before beating the Eagles in Super Bowl XV.
28. Matt Bahr. His field goal with 7:40 remaining in the fourth quarter put the Giants ahead, 20-19.
29. Dick Vermeil, 19 years. Vermeil coached the Eagles to Super Bowl XV and the Rams to Super Bowl XXXIV.
30. Dallas Cowboys. The Cowboys scored 31 points in their loss to Pittsburgh in Super Bowl XIII.
31. Andre Reed, Bills. Reed had 27 career Super Bowl catches.
32. Weeb Ewbank. In fact, Ewbank's 73 wins in his 11-year tenure (1963-73) still stand as a Jets record.
33. Trent Dilfer. He completed 12 of 25 passes for 153 yards, including a 38-yard TD pass to Brandon Stokley.
34. McGee had seven catches against the Chiefs in Super Bowl I, including two that went for touchdowns.
35. Miami. While Minnesota and Buffalo are both 0-4, and Denver has a 2-4 mark, the Dolphins are 2-3 in their five Super Bowl appearances.
36. Tom Flores. Flores was a member of the Super Bowl IV champion Chiefs and coached the Raiders to the Super Bowl XV title.
37. Tom Brady. He completed 32 passes in the Patriots' victory over Carolina in Super Bowl XXXVIII.
38. Stanford Jennings, on a 93-yard kickoff return that gave the Bengals a 13-6 lead.
39. The Miami Dolphins were held to just a field goal in their 24-3 loss to Dallas in Super Bowl VI.
40. Matt Millen won as a member of the Raiders (Super Bowls XV and XVIII), the 49ers (Super Bowl XXIV), and the Redskins (Super Bowl XXVI).

YOUR SCORE

40 correct:	Move over, '72 Dolphins
35-39:	You're in dynasty territory
30-34:	The makings of a trivia champion
25-29:	Perennial trivia playoff qualifier
20-24:	Not title material, but not bad, either
10-19:	Better brush up before next year's re-test
Fewer than 10:	Give back your Super Bowl tickets

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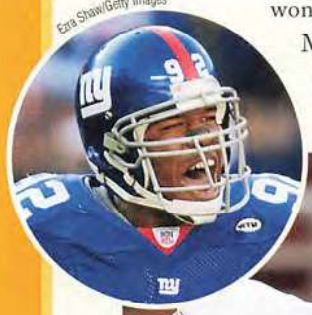
Looking Ahead

NFL EXCITEMENT CONTINUES ALL YEAR

PRO BOWL

www.nfl.com/probowl

The AFC All-Stars square off against their NFC counterparts in the Pro Bowl, which is headed to Hawaii for the 27th straight year and will be played Sunday, Feb. 12, at Aloha Stadium. Among the standouts expected to play are the Giants' Michael Strahan (inset) and the Chiefs' Tony Gonzalez (below). The game will be live on ESPN at 6:00 p.m. (Eastern) with the *Sunday Night Football* broadcast team of Mike Patrick, Joe Theismann, and Paul Maguire, along with sideline reporter Suzy Kolber. Last year, the AFC won, 38-27, as Pro Bowl MVP Peyton Manning threw for 130 yards and three TDs.



Ezra Shaw/Getty Images

Scott Boehm/Getty Images

NFL EUROPE

www.nfleurope.com

The 14th season of NFL Europe gets underway on Saturday, March 18, with a rematch of World Bowl XIII, when the Amsterdam Admirals face the Berlin Thunder. Last June, the Admirals won their first NFL Europe title, beating the Thunder, 27-21. Four other teams will compete in NFL Europe this spring: Cologne Centurions, Hamburg Sea Devils, Frankfurt Galaxy, and Rhein Fire. NFL Europe games will be televised by NFL Network. World Bowl XIV is scheduled for the weekend of May 27-28.

NFL DRAFT

www.nfl.com/draft

Get ready for the most exciting weekend of the off-season! The 71st annual NFL Draft takes place April 29-30 in New York City, starting at 12 noon each day. ESPN again will televise the draft live, and fans also can follow the proceedings by logging on to www.nfl.com. Last year's top pick was quarterback Alex Smith, chosen by the San Francisco 49ers (pictured below with NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue).

Chris Trotman/Getty Images

HALL OF FAME WEEKEND

www.profootballhof.com

Hall of Fame Weekend 2006 is tentatively set for Aug. 5-7 in Canton, Ohio. That's when the latest group of NFL legends will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. A big part of the weekend is the AFC-NFC Hall of Fame Game played at Fawcett Stadium, a tradition since 1962. Last year, the Bears defeated the Dolphins, 27-24. For information on tickets and group packages for this year's Hall of Fame induction events, call (330) 456-8207.

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

NFL KICKOFF 2006

www.nfl.com

Travis Lindquist/Getty Images

The NFL's 87th season will commence on Thursday, Sept. 7, with celebrations at two sites. Continuing a tradition that began in 2004, *NFL Kickoff Live* will include events at the home of the Super Bowl XL champion and in Miami (site of Super Bowl XLI), and feature some of the entertainment world's biggest stars. Green Day, with lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong (above), was among the bands performing at Gillette Stadium last September, prior to the Patriots-Raiders season opener.

Zoran Milich/Getty Images

SUPER BOWL XLI

www.superbowl.com

Next stop: Miami. Super Bowl XLI is set for Feb. 4, 2007, and will be played at Dolphins Stadium (above). The contest will air on CBS. A limited number of game tickets are available to the general public through a random drawing. Requests are accepted starting Feb. 1, 2006, and must be sent via certified or registered mail to:

Super Bowl Random Drawing
P.O. Box 49140
Strongsville, Ohio 44149-0140

Future Super Bowl Sites:

SB XLII—Glendale, AZ (Feb. 3, 2008)
SB XLIII—Tampa, FL (Feb. 1, 2009)
SB XLIV—Miami, FL (TBA)

ROOKIE SALUTE

The Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week and Rookie of the Year programs have completed a fourth successful year. Over one million fans voted at www.nfl.com to determine the 2005 Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Year. A strong and balanced rookie class was evident with more than 35 players being nominated for Rookie of the Week and 12 different players capturing Rookie of the Week honors at least once during the 2005 NFL season.

The winner, announced Thursday February 2, was chosen from a field of five outstanding players who were the top vote-getters during the Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week program. The Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Year winner is joining the likes of Ben Roethlisberger, Jeremy Shockey, and Domanick Davis in the hallowed halls of Rookie fame. Diet Pepsi congratulates a great rookie class.

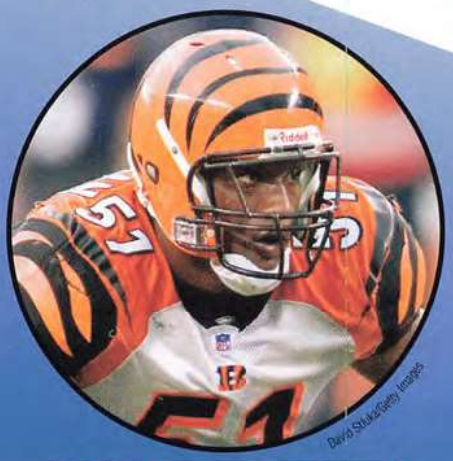
2005 DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Tom Strattman/AP WWP

Shawne Merriman
Linebacker, Chargers

Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

DeMarcus Ware
Linebacker, Cowboys

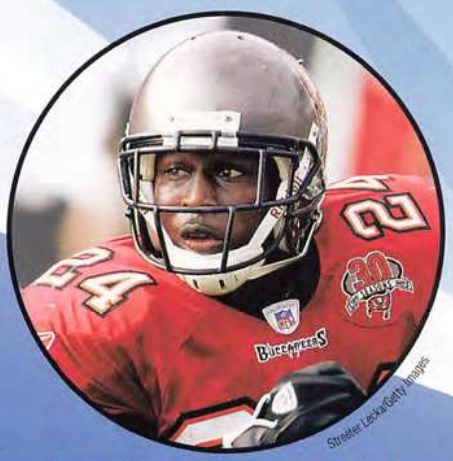


David Stluka/Getty Images

Odell Thurman
Linebacker, Bengals

Jamie Squire/Getty Images

Lofa Tatupu
Linebacker, Seahawks



Streeter Lecka/Getty Images

Carnell Williams
Running Back, Buccaneers

2005 DIET PEPSI NFL ROOKIE OF THE WEEK WINNERS

Each week during the 2005 NFL season, fans logged on to www.nfl.com to cast votes for the Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week.

To the right are the 2005 Diet Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week award winners:

Week 1:	Carnell Williams	Week 7:	Kyle Orton	Week 13:	Charlie Frye
Week 2:	Carnell Williams	Week 8:	Heath Miller	Week 14:	Samkon Gado
Week 3:	Carnell Williams	Week 9:	Reggie Brown	Week 15:	Charlie Frye
Week 4:	Domonique Foxworth	Week 10:	Samkon Gado	Week 16:	DeMarcus Ware
Week 5:	Tyson Thompson	Week 11:	Shawne Merriman	Week 17:	Charlie Frye
Week 6:	Odell Thurman	Week 12:	Ryan Fitzpatrick		

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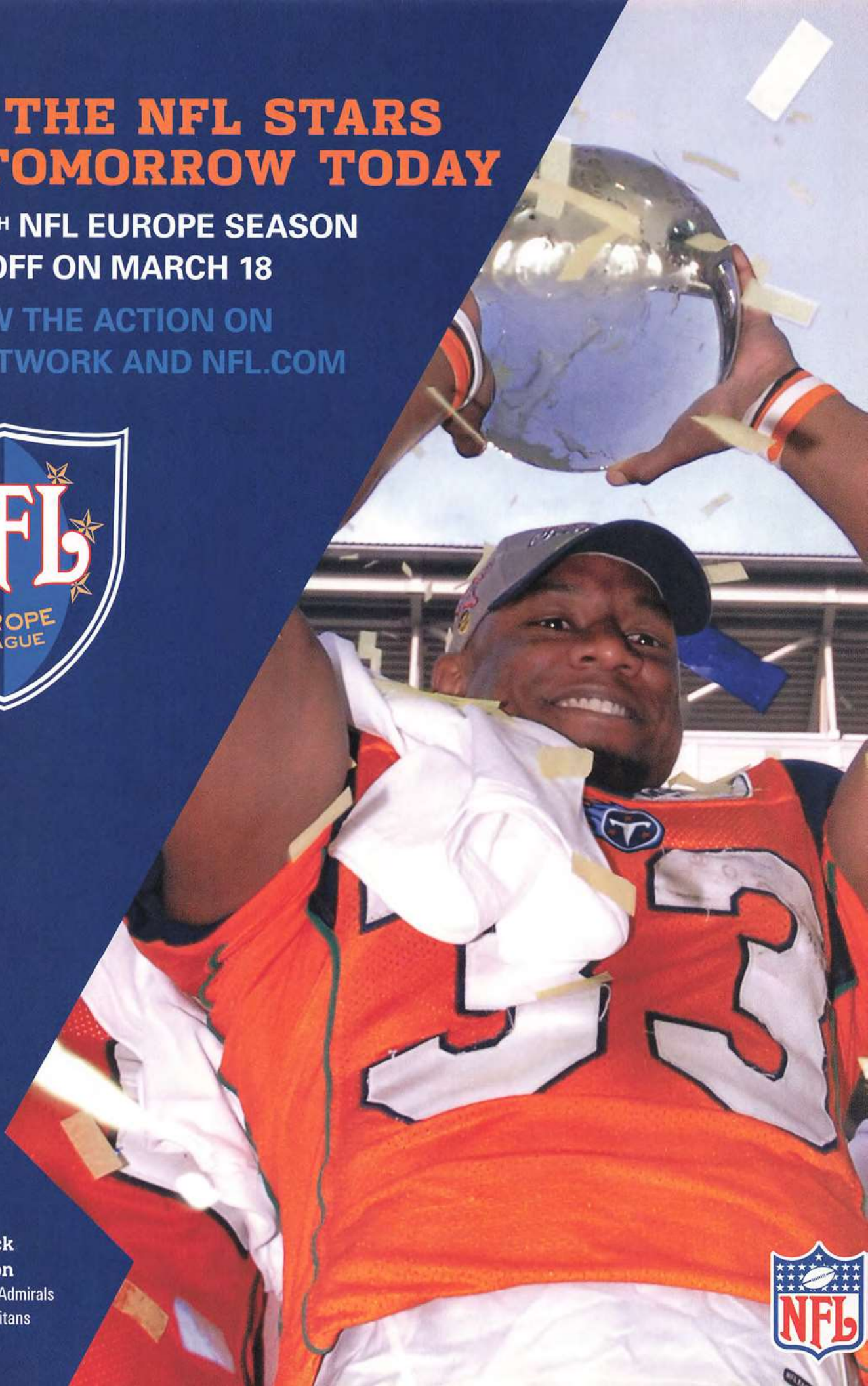


Running Back
Jarrett Payton
2005 Amsterdam Admirals
2005 Tennessee Titans

NFL

reachingout

YET Centers Give Super Bowl A Lasting Presence In Host Cities

Since 1993, the NFL has constructed Youth Education Towns in Super Bowl host cities. In partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs and a network of local nonprofit organizations, the NFL YET initiative is devoted to positively impacting youngsters who reside in at-risk neighborhoods in these cities. The league donates $1 million annually toward the project, with additional funding coming from local public and private donations.

YET Centers offer tutoring, mentoring, career training, computer education, and access to athletic programs. They are designed to help kids succeed and provide educational assistance, job training, technical instruction, life-skills development, and recreational outlets. Facilities are unique but all include libraries, classrooms, technology labs, and fitness centers.

Since 1993, 13 YETs have been dedicated in 10 cities—Los Angeles, Atlanta, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, New Orleans, Phoenix, Tampa (2), San Diego (2), Houston (2), and Jacksonville.

ATLANTA Located between the historic Summer Hill and Grant Park communities, Atlanta's YET includes a 6,500-square foot office and classroom facility, gymnasium, and a 70-yard football field. The academic building houses a pair of state-of-the-art computer labs. More than 7,500 youth have been served, and nearly 90 percent of the Center's children have adult mentors.

FT. LAUDERDALE Since its opening, the YET in Ft. Lauderdale has ranked among that area's premier centers for youngsters. It includes a modern computer lab, gymnasium, study room, senior and junior recreation game rooms, and arts and crafts room. Membership has increased 200 percent since 2000.

HOUSTON Last February, the NFL broke ground on two YETs in Houston. As in other host cities, they will offer educational and recreational programs for the area's underserved youth. They are slated to open in 2006.

JACKSONVILLE In February 2005, the Jacksonville YET was dedicated at a ceremony during Super Bowl Week. With the help of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida and several community organizations, the NFL is preparing for the groundbreaking and construction of the Jacksonville YET this year. This Center will be built on two acres of the Catherine Hester McNair Park in the Brentwood neighborhood in northwest Jacksonville.

LOS ANGELES The first YET Center, founded in 1993, has delivered educational programs and social services to young people and their families. In 2003, the Center relocated to a new 15,000-square foot facility in Harbor City. It has a full-size regulation gymnasium, art center, library, computer lab, and an audio/video digital studio. More than 50 percent of the working staff and volunteers at Los Angeles' NFL YET are former club members.

MIAMI The NFL YET at Gwen Cherry Park is an outstanding public/private partnership that brings educational and recreational programming to residents of Miami-Dade County. The 22,000-square foot Center serves more than 800 at-risk children between the ages of 6-14. Summer program enrollment has expanded by 200 percent since its opening. The Miami YET's football team won the 2003 Pop Warner national title.

NEW ORLEANS The mission of the New Orleans YET is to create a safe learning environment in the B.W. Cooper and Broadmoor communities that complements and expands existing educational programs. The facility features a computer lab consisting of 45 work stations, along with classrooms and counseling offices, and offers academic assistance, life-skills instruction, and community health programs. At the New Orleans YET, 71 percent of members have improved in reading and on standardized test scores.

Photos courtesy of the NFL

PHOENIX The YET Center in Phoenix has partnered with local non-profits in an effort to develop a new generation of leaders in the city's Hispanic community. It includes a charter school and an after-school center to better serve the area's low-income families. The 10,000-square foot Center, which serves youth ages 9 to 18, features a state-of-the-art computer facility. In Phoenix, 100 percent of YET members have graduated high school and 95 percent have gone on to college.

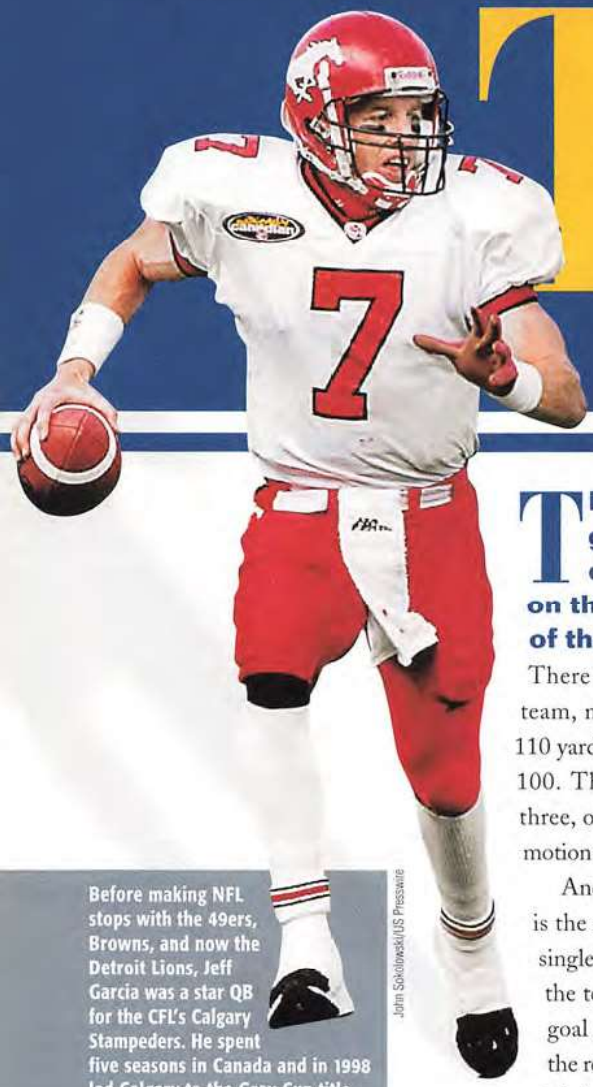
SAN DIEGO San Diego has a pair of YET Centers in recognition of the city's two most recent Super Bowls. The Golden Hill Center, which opened in 1998, serves 600 students per year and provides programming in the areas of health and nutrition education, technology, mentoring, and theatre. The City Heights facility focuses on children ages 9 to 17 and implements life skills, cultural arts, and recreation programs for more than 250 youth per year.

TAMPA Tampa also enjoys the presence of two YET campuses. The first one opened in Jackson Heights in May of 2002; a second opened a year later in Hillsborough County. These facilities feature computer labs, money management classes, cultural activities, and community service projects. In Tampa, 75 percent of the YET participants have graduated high school and gone on to college.

The Game's the Thing

Whether it's the NFL or CFL, Canadian fans have shown they love their football.

by Curt Sylvester



Before making NFL stops with the 49ers, Browns, and now the Detroit Lions, Jeff Garcia was a star QB for the CFL's Calgary Stampeders. He spent five seasons in Canada and in 1998 led Calgary to the Grey Cup title.

John Sokolowski/US Presswire

They play the game a little differently on the other side of the border.

There are 12 men on a team, not 11. Fields are 110 yards long, instead of 100. There can be two, three, or more players in motion at the same time.

And, of course, there is the rouge. That's the single point awarded to the team trying a field goal or punting when the receiving team fails to bring the kicked ball out of the end zone. Perhaps more than any other rules deviation, it's what makes the Canadian Football League unique from the NFL.

But when it comes to Super Bowl XL, Detroit's neighbors at the other end of the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario—as well as in other hotbeds of NFL football in Canada—can be just as passionate about the game as any red-blooded American.

In what is being billed as the first international Super Bowl, the Canadians did not sign on as a silent partner. They love their 12-man game and they love their Grey Cup (the name for the CFL title game), but they're equally crazy about the NFL and the Super Bowl.

"That's probably the essence of Windsor," says Mark Falkner, sports editor of the *Windsor Star*. "There's far more interest in [American] football and the Super Bowl, the playoffs, and all the fantasy pools than there is in the CFL and any other football. It's become must-see TV on the weekends. We're more Americanized than the rest of Canada, which has an enormous interest in the CFL."

Kyle Ringler, a restaurant general manager in Windsor, is among those Canadians who prefer the American version of the game.

"I'm a huge Buccaneers fan," Ringler says. "I was in my glory three years ago. I know a lot of people from Windsor who drive to Detroit and used to go to the Silverdome. Now they go to Ford Field. I grew up in Brantford [Ontario], which is the home of Wayne Gretzky, and we used to travel to Hamilton to watch the [CFL's] Tiger Cats play, but I like the American rules better."

None of this passion surprises Detroit Lions quarterback Jeff Garcia, who spent five seasons with the CFL's Calgary Stampeders, won a Grey Cup title in 1998, and during that time developed an understanding for the Canadian fans' appreciation of the Super Bowl.

"It's an event," says Garcia. "In many ways, Canadians like to have a good time no matter what the event is, so the Super Bowl has become another reason for friends to get together and have some fun."

Although Canadian fans might have their individual preferences, the NFL and CFL have existed in a spirit of cooperation for several decades.

"There's a lot of pride in the CFL," says Pete Abitante, the NFL's senior director of international public affairs. "They actually have a longer history than we do."

The most recent Grey Cup—an overtime thriller held November 27 and won by Edmonton, 38-35, over Montreal—was the 93rd in the series. Even more impressive, some level of organized football has been played in each of the Canadian provinces since 1890.

Because of the differences in the rules of the respective leagues,

competition between NFL teams and CFL teams has been limited to a handful of games played between 1950 and 1961, most of them won by the NFL. In 1996, however, the NFL came to the CFL's rescue and the two leagues joined in an overall development plan still in existence today.

"The CFL had come to us when they were struggling," says NFL International vice president Gordon Smeaton. "They went through an ill-fated U.S. expansion in the early part of the 1990s and had several franchises in financial difficulty, so they needed almost a bit of a bridge loan to help them out. And we agreed to that."

The NFL loaned the CFL $3 million and out of that deal grew a new and more complete understanding between the leagues.

As NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue explains it: "Having a strong CFL is important to the NFL. It is good for the NFL if people are interested in football. It's our sport, it's a great sport, and the particular form of the sport is less important than the interest in the game."

The leagues began collaborating on routine matters like instant replay and collective bargaining issues, but have also worked together on more significant matters: the televising of NFL games in Canada (via Sunday Ticket and NFL Network), corporate sponsorships, and merchandising.

Ryan Remiorz/AP WWP

Hoisting the Grey Cup after what has been called the greatest CFL title game ever played, Chris Morris (left) and A.J. Gass of the Edmonton Eskimos celebrate their team's 38-35 win over Montreal.

"It's somewhat of a unique relationship in professional sports and we're proud of it," Smeaton says. "We have a close relationship with their commissioner. In many ways we do compete because we're talking to the same companies that will sponsor, in some cases, one brand of football over the other.

"But we have many companies we do business with that are shared—Reebok, for instance. It makes a lot of sense for Reebok and others, but where it really makes sense is at the grass-roots level. We've co-sponsored flag football programs with the CFL since 1997."

The flag football program was particularly important to the CFL as a vehicle to connect with the next generation of football fans.

"The feeling was that when the CFL was struggling, they weren't able to address that next generation," Smeaton says. "Well, working with us, we could afford to do that. Obviously, we don't have a franchise in Canada so this was an area we wanted to target—youth. In fact, the first cities in which we started these flag football leagues were CFL cities. The idea was to get as many kids playing as possible and to get as many families as possible attending CFL games."

Although Canadian fans might have their individual preferences, the NFL and CFL have existed in a spirit of cooperation for several decades.

Although the CFL does not approach the NFL in size and scope, it is flourishing and remains extremely popular.

"The CFL is a huge game," Falkner says. "And as far as the ratings go, it's amazing. It's such a part of the Canadian fabric, the essence of Canadian sport. The number of people who watch the Grey Cup in Canada...there are 30 million people in the country and the ratings go as high as four or five million, so one in six people watch our championship, even if they couldn't name one player in the league."

Canada has exported its share of native-born sons to the NFL, most notable among them Pro Football Hall of Famers Bronko Nagurski of Rainy River, Ontario, and Arnie Weinmeister of Rhein, Saskatchewan. Nagurski played fullback for the Bears in the 1930s; Weinmeister was a defensive tackle with the Giants in the early 1950s.

The trend continues today. Among the dozen Canadians in the league in 2005 were Colts kicker Mike Vanderjagt (Oakville, Ontario) and Saints punter Mitch Berger (Vancouver)—both who have gone to the Pro Bowl—as well as Jaguars defensive end Rob Meier (West Vancouver) and Rams guard Tom Nutten (Magog, Quebec).

Similarly, the list of players successful in both the CFL and NFL is long and distinguished—Vince Ferragamo, Joe Theismann, Warren Moon, Doug Flutie, Rocket Ismail, and Erik Kramer to name a few. Moon, who won five titles in six years with Edmonton, is a CFL Hall of Famer and this year was a finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

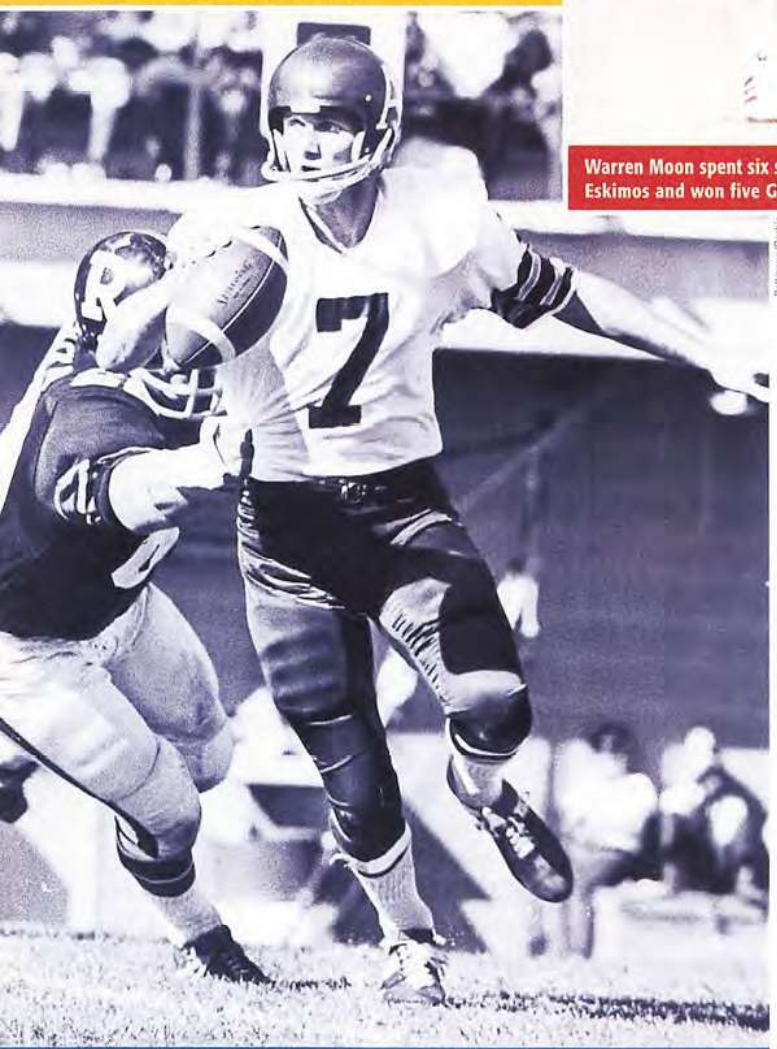
Even though Garcia had built an impressive resumé as a three-year starter at San Jose State—where he was an All-American as a junior and set the school record for total offense—he couldn't catch a break in the NFL, so he headed north to launch his pro career.

Frank Gunn/AP WWP

Doug Flutie's scrambling style was perfectly suited for the CFL. He was a six-time MVP and won three titles.

John Sokolowski/US Presswire

Warren Moon spent six seasons with the Edmonton Eskimos and won five Grey Cup championships.



Bettmann/Corbis

Joe Theismann played three seasons with the Toronto Argonauts before joining the Redskins in 1974. He later led Washington to the Super Bowl XVII crown.

"I had a great experience in Canada," Garcia says. "I owe so much of where I am today because of the five years I had playing there. The great times, the great people I met, the support we had in Calgary, and the opportunity to compete and experience a championship. Those are some of the best moments in my life and especially my football career."

While in the CFL, Garcia discovered a camaraderie difficult to match even on the best NFL teams.

"The thing about the CFL is that because of the level of payout, it is not so much a business as it is a sense of being able to do something you love and hopefully being able to play the game for as long as you can," Garcia says.

"I think that was the major difference [for players] between the CFL and the NFL. In the NFL, you know you can be secure for the rest of your life with a few good years of quality play and a quality contract. In the CFL, that wasn't going to happen.

"I had teammates who held other jobs during the season and they played the game simply for the love of it. I think the attitude was a little bit different among the players. They were much more laid back and definitely not consumed with the status of where they stood from a money standpoint. Everybody was on an equal level."

Similar to many Americans who go to Canada to play, Garcia's focus in his early years was on making a name for himself and moving on to the National Football League.

"For my first couple years in the CFL, I really felt I was using the league as a stepping stone," he says. "But once I got into my fourth and fifth seasons up there, I started to believe the NFL just wasn't going to happen for me.

"It didn't change how I competed or how I prepared, but that vision of playing in the NFL started to fade away," continues Garcia. "Then, all of a sudden, things did change, but a lot of that had to do with the fact I was having a great time playing in the CFL; I wasn't as concerned about [reaching the NFL] anymore."

Garcia made a home in Canada and even started a business, but shortly after he earned Grey Cup MVP honors while leading Calgary to the 1998 title, the San Francisco 49ers came calling. It was an invitation he couldn't turn down. Eventually, Garcia succeeded Steve Young as the 49ers' quarterback and earned three Pro Bowl trips. His NFL career now spans seven seasons, including 2005 as a member of the Lions.

But it all started with that different kind of football. The kind they play—with lots of passion—on the other side of the border. ■

Curt Sylvester is a Detroit-based freelance writer who retired from the Detroit Free Press *last fall after 27 years on the Lions/NFL beat. During his time with the paper, he covered 27 Super Bowls.*

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by Roger Staubach

Tony Tomsic/AP Photos

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There are men and women who don't follow football all year, but they still know about—and never miss—the Super Bowl. Although my wife watched me play for a long time and will attend Cowboys games with me, I wouldn't say she is a big football fan. But she will watch the whole Super Bowl. And that holds true for people here in America, and increasingly throughout the world.

Even though the Super Bowl has evolved into a corporate-type event, it's still people in these corporations (along with some very lucky die-hard fans) who attend the game. You look at the ticket prices and, sure, they're out of sight. But they could probably charge $5,000 a ticket, and the place would still sell out—that's how great the demand is. And, amazingly, it probably still has room to grow.

It's the same with TV. People watch a lot of those crazy, reality-based shows, but the one consistent programming they watch is football because they relate to it. And the Super Bowl—with the way friends and family unfailingly gather together for it—is the biggest reason. The Super Bowl is more than a game; it's a tradition.

NFL/Wirelmage.com

Growing up in Cincinnati in the 1950s, I can remember the NFL when it began to have success on television; it really took off late in that decade. Then came the merger with the AFL. In 1969, when I joined the Cowboys from the Naval Academy, I got in when the league was on a roll.

It was the Vietnam era. Not unlike today, there were a lot of events taking place in the country and around the world. People vigorously disagreed on important issues, but the Super Bowl rose above that division and became something everyone could share.

I was fortunate to be part of five Super Bowl teams and people still ask me what it was like playing in those games. Super Bowl XII in the Louisiana Superdome—when we beat Denver—might have been the most overwhelming. On the field, we couldn't hear anything because we were indoors and the fans were screaming. Everyone was nervous and I remember our running back, Robert Newhouse, saying to me, "You've got to get these guys under control."

"Hey, Robert," I answered. "I'm trying to get myself under control."

It's in those situations when you have to block out the distractions and react based on what you can do, learned through repetition in practice. Early on, it's the hardest thing to get to the point where you're executing the way you want and doing the things you know you can, but one of the most important qualities of an athlete is the ability to perform at the highest level when the pressure is on. Some do and some don't. And sometimes your highest level is still not enough.

I'm grateful for my NFL career, which spanned 11 seasons, and I'm grateful to the Naval Academy for the opportunities and experiences it provided. Even though I was in the service for only four years—including active duty in Vietnam—I've always felt very close to the military.

When I was introduced before a game as, "Roger Staubach, Navy," I was really proud of that. My heroes had always been those who devoted their lives to the service.

Throughout my pro career, I played in cities where most fans probably hated the Cowboys, but enough service people came to the games who probably didn't hate me. I got a very warm reception in a lot of those stadiums.

A strong link has developed between the NFL and the United States military, especially at the Super Bowl, which each year is surrounded by a major celebration of patriotism. To me, that's a very positive and uplifting thing, and part of the magic of the game.

But regardless of what draws you to the Super Bowl, remember it's an occasion to set aside our differences and together enjoy what has become football's greatest day. ■

Roger Staubach won two Super Bowls and was MVP of Super Bowl VI. Inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1985, he is the founder of The Staubach Company, a global real estate advisory firm. His essay also appears in The Super Bowl: An Official Retrospective, *published in November by Ballantine Books.*

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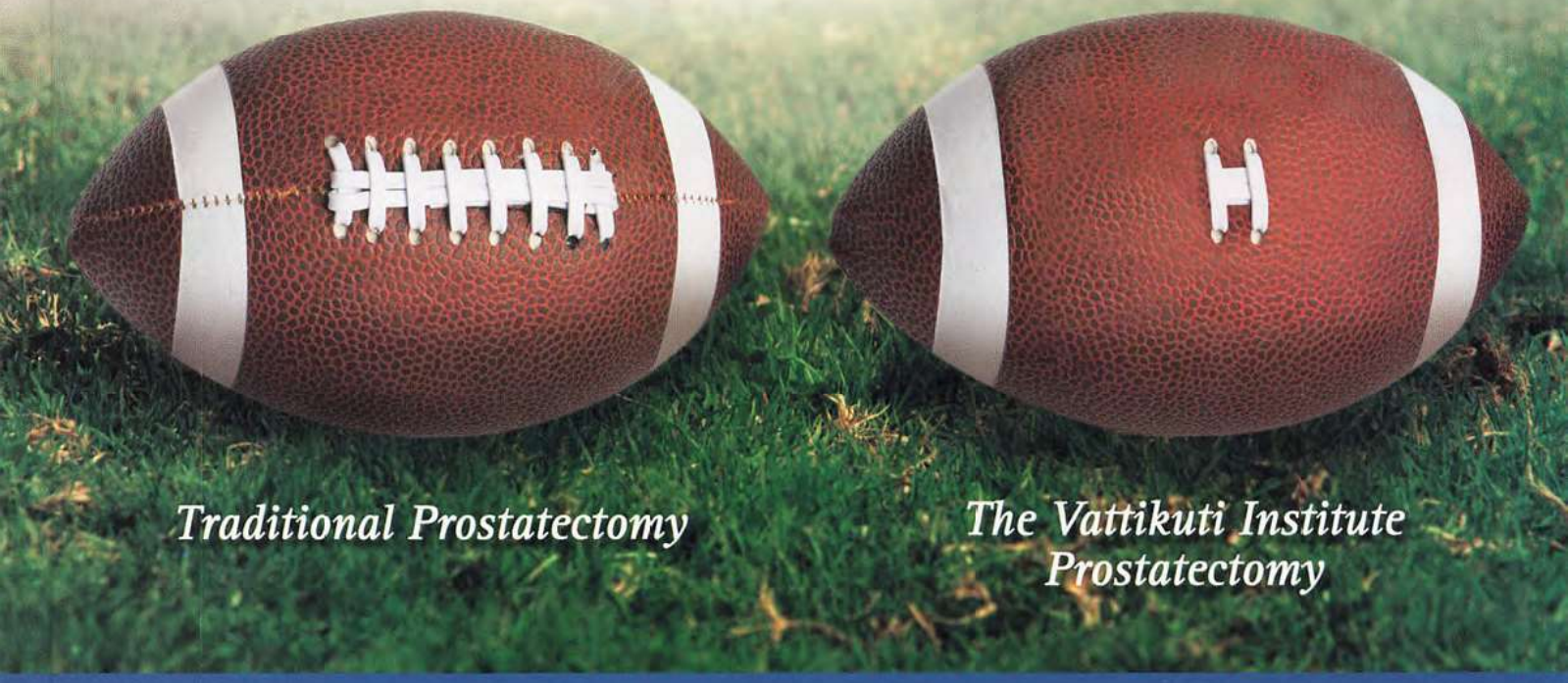

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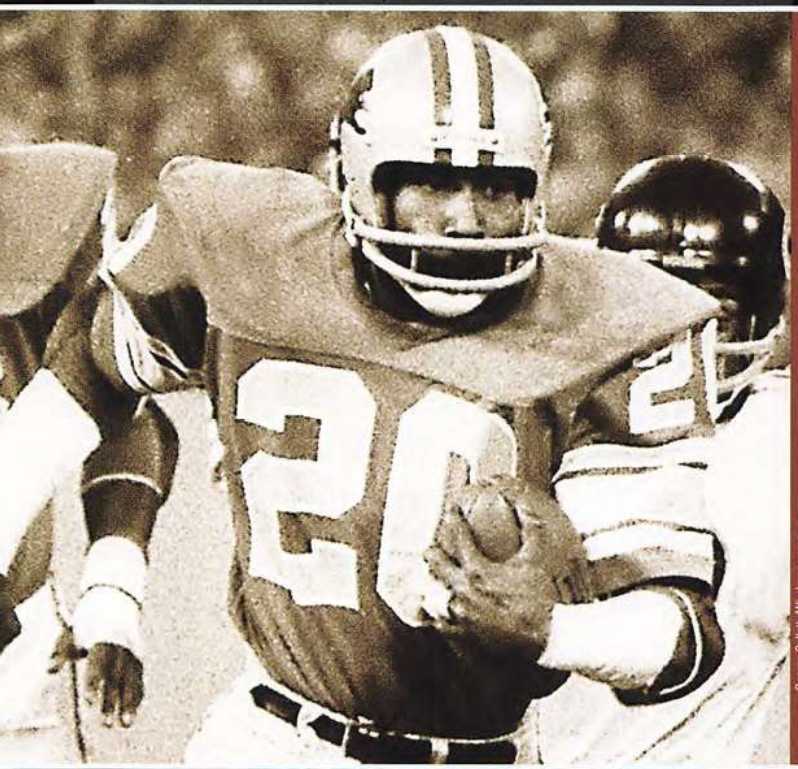
Heads Of State

The road to Canton makes several pit-stops in Michigan. There are 16 former Detroit Lions enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame—joined by several Wolverine State natives and college stars—all who made a significant impact on the NFL.



George Gellaty/Wirelmage.com

Lem Barney

A second-round draft pick by the Lions in 1967, Lem Barney quickly emerged as one of the game's premier cornerbacks. In his first season, he shared the NFL lead for interceptions (10), including three that he returned for touchdowns, and was named the league's Defensive Rookie of the Year. He also earned his first of seven selections to the Pro Bowl. Always a big-play threat, Barney grabbed 56 interceptions in his career and scored 11 TDs: seven on interceptions; two on punt returns; one on a kickoff return; and another on a field goal return.

Profile

Born: 9/8/45 in Gulfport, MS
Inducted: *1992*
Position: Cornerback
College: Jackson State
Pro Career: 1967-77 Detroit Lions

George Gellaty/Wirelmage.com

Jack Christiansen

Once dismissed as too small even to play college football, Jack Christiansen went on to star on the game's biggest stage. As a rookie with the Lions in 1951, he returned four punts for TDs. He then played a major role in the team's success that decade, lining up at left safety as Detroit won three NFL championships and four division titles. Christiansen led the league in interceptions in 1953, shared the lead in 1957, and was an All-NFL selection six straight years. He retired with 46 career interceptions and eight punt returns for TDs.

Profile

Born: 12/20/28 in Sublette, KS **Died:** 6/29/86
Inducted: *1970*
Position: Defensive Back
College: Colorado State
Pro Career: 1951-58 Detroit Lions

Courtesy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame

Earl Clark

One of the game's true triple-threats, Dutch Clark's story doesn't fit the typical picture of an all-time great. In 1929, he became the first Colorado College football star named All-America, yet didn't play pro football until almost two years after graduating. He then retired after two All-Pro seasons—to become head coach at Colorado School of Mines—but returned to action in 1934. For the next five years, Clark was the general in Detroit's famed ground attack that helped win the 1935 NFL title and one year later set a team rushing record that stood for nearly four decades. Consistently among the league leaders in rushing, Clark once completed 53.5 percent of his passes in a season (when the league average stood at 36.5 percent). He also led the NFL in scoring three times and is considered to be the last of the great drop kickers. Clark was All-NFL six times and served as player-coach in his final two years in Detroit.

Profile

Born: 10/11/06 in Fowler, CO **Died:** 8/5/78
Inducted: *1963*
Position: Quarterback
College: Colorado College
Pro Career: 1931-32 Portsmouth Spartans; 1934-38 Detroit Lions

Frank Rippon/Wireimage.com

Lou Creekmur

Lou Creekmur wasted little time in establishing himself as one of the most versatile and talented performers on a Detroit team loaded with outstanding players. During the 1950s—when the Lions won three NFL championships—Creekmur was a perennial All-NFL selection. After starting his pro career as an offensive guard and earning all-league acclaim there twice, he shifted to left tackle, where he remained for most of his 10-year career. As a tackle, he was named All-NFL four times. Extremely durable, Creekmur played every preseason, regular-season and postseason game during his first nine years as a pro and owned a streak of more than 165 straight game appearances. In 1955, he was even called upon to play defensive middle guard and was used by the Lions' defense for critical short-yardage situations throughout his career. Creekmur was selected to eight straight Pro Bowls from 1950-57.

Profile

Born: 1/22/27 in Hopelawn, NJ
Inducted: *1996*
Position: Tackle/Guard
College: William & Mary
Pro Career: 1950-59 Detroit Lions

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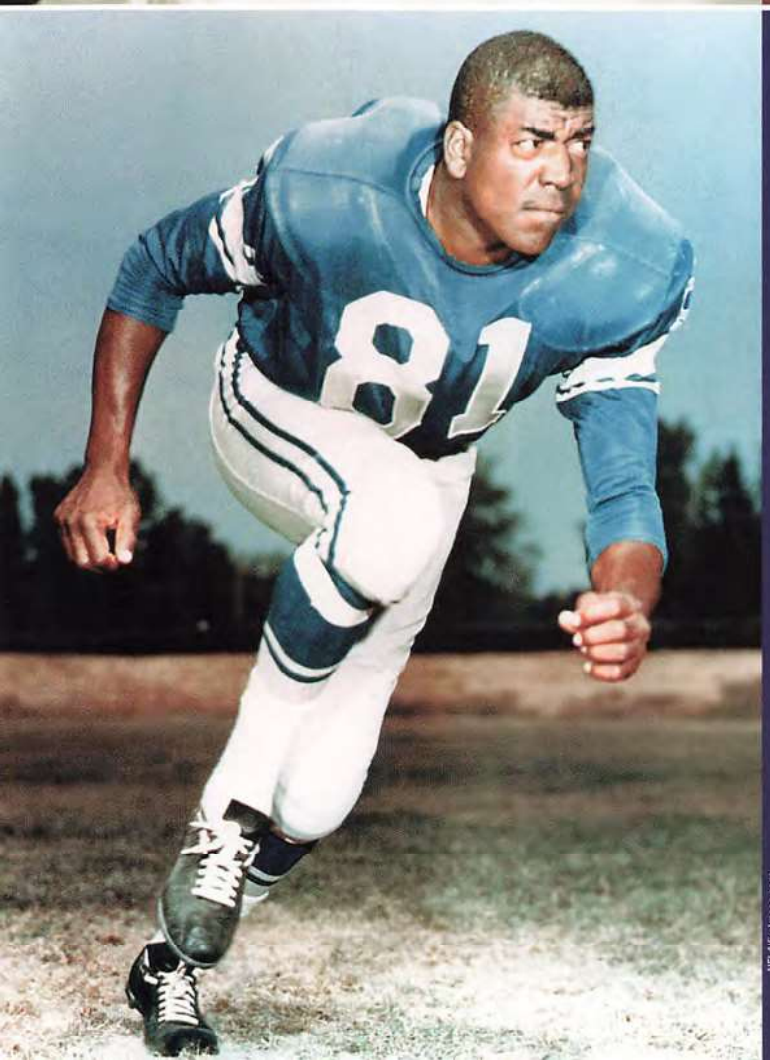
Bill Dudley

Bill Dudley always wanted the ball. And it seemed there wasn't anything he couldn't do once he got it—the 5-10, 182-pound halfback ran, passed, punted, and placekicked. He returned punts and kickoffs, caught passes, and, on top of that, was an standout defender. "Bullet Bill" was a first-round draft pick by the Steelers in 1942 and finished his rookie season as the league's leading rusher with 696 yards. In 1946, when he had an unprecedented achievement by leading the league in four distinctly different categories (rushing, punt returns, interceptions, and lateral passes attempted), Dudley was named the NFL's Most Valuable Player. He joined the Lions in 1947 and again demonstrated his versatility by scoring 11 TDs—on one punt return, one interception return, seven pass receptions, and two rushes. Dudley was chosen All-NFL on six occasions and was named to three Pro Bowls. He finished with 23 career interceptions.

Profile

Born: 12/24/21 in Bluefield, VA
Inducted: *1966*
Position: Halfback
College: Virginia
Pro Career: 1942, 1945-46 Pittsburgh Steelers;
1947-49 Detroit Lions;
1950-51, 1953 Washington Redskins



NFL Wirelmage.com

Dick Lane

Although Dick "Night Train" Lane possessed all the tools—speed, agility, and aggressiveness—to be an NFL superstar, he was an unknown when he joined the Rams as a free agent after four years in the Army. Lane impressed Los Angeles head coach Joe Stydahar with a battered scrapbook chronicling his achievements in high school, junior college, and the service, so the coach took a chance. Lane immediately set the NFL on fire, making 14 interceptions as a rookie (in 12 games) while becoming known as a devastating hitter and open-field tackler. Following the 1953 season, he was dealt to the Cardinals, played there six years, then moved on to the Lions where he enjoyed his greatest success. Lane was selected first- or second-team All-NFL every year from 1954-63, was named to seven Pro Bowls, and earned six All-NFL selections. For his career, Lane intercepted 68 passes, five that he returned for touchdowns.

Profile

Born: 4/16/28 in Austin, TX **Died:** 1/29/02
Inducted: *1974*
Position: Cornerback
College: Scottsbluff Jr. College
Pro Career: 1952-53 Los Angeles Rams;
1954-59 Chicago Cardinals;
1960-65 Detroit Lions

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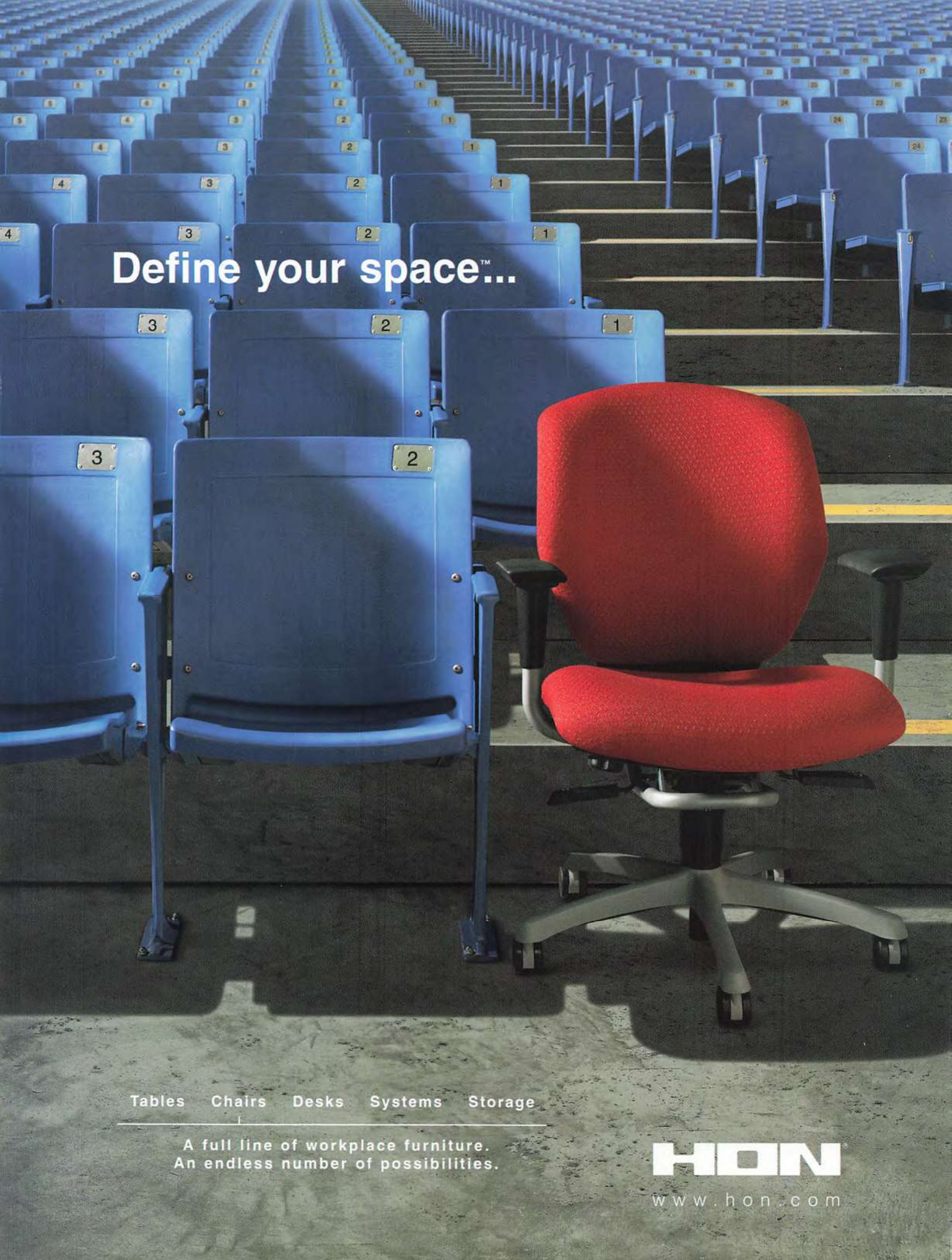
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Yale Lary

One of the Lions' most popular and versatile players—and a member of three NFL championship teams—Yale Lary contributed in many ways during an outstanding 11-year pro career. The third-round draft pick out of Texas A&M developed into a superb right safety, forming a key cog in Detroit's fearsome defensive platoon and making 50 career interceptions. It's likely that Lary would have totaled many more if opposing quarterbacks hadn't wisely decided to avoid throwing in his direction. He also was one of the league's greatest punters, averaging 44.3 yards for his career. Lary won three NFL punting crowns, including 1963 when he averaged 48.9 yards per kick—which still ranks as the second-highest single-season figure in league history. Lary's famous breakaway speed was most on display while returning punts, and he brought back three for touchdowns. He was named All-NFL five times and appeared in nine Pro Bowls.

Profile

Born: 11/24/30 in Fort Worth, TX
Inducted: *1979*
Position: Defensive Back
College: Texas A&M
Pro Career: 1952-53, 1956-64 Detroit Lions

Bettmann/Corbis

Bobby Layne

Free-spirited Bobby Layne enjoyed a 15-year pro career and possessed intangibles that even outweighed his considerable skills. Never were Layne's qualities as evident as in his years with the Lions, when his leadership, determination, competitiveness, and guts helped capture four division titles and three NFL championships. He threw a career-high 26 TD passes in 1951, but it was in the 1953 league title game that he solidified his reputation. With the Lions trailing the Browns, 16-10, late in the fourth quarter, he calmly directed an 80-yard scoring drive that earned Detroit its second straight crown. In 1958, Layne was dealt to Pittsburgh where he reunited with his old Lions coach Buddy Parker. He was twice an All-NFL selection and was named second team All-NFL four times. The league scoring champion in 1956, Layne ended his career with 372 points and 196 touchdown passes. He also rushed for nearly 2,500 career yards.

Profile

Born: 12/19/26 in Santa Anna, TX **Died:** 12/1/86
Inducted: *1967*
Position: Quarterback
College: Texas
Pro Career: 1948 Chicago Bears;
1949 N.Y. Bulldogs; 1950-58 Detroit Lions;
1958-62 Pittsburgh Steelers

David Stluka/Getty Images

Barry Sanders

One of the most electrifying and elusive runners in history, Barry Sanders rushed for more than 1,000 yards in each of his 10 seasons in the league, becoming the first NFL back to do so. The 1988 Heisman Trophy winner out of Oklahoma State also was just the third player to gain more than 2,000 yards in a single-season. A four-time league rushing champion (1990, 1994, 1996, 1997), the 1997 season was Sanders' most remarkable. He gained 2,053 yards, had a league-record 14 straight 100-yard rushing games, and was named Most Valuable Player as the Lions reached the playoffs for the fourth time in five years. For his career, Sanders rushed for 15,269 yards, scored 99 times, and averaged 5.0 yards per carry. He also was an excellent receiver, with 352 catches and nine touchdowns. Sanders was a first- or second-team All-NFL selection, as well as picked for the Pro Bowl, every season he was in the league.

Profile

Born: 7/16/68 in Wichita, KS
Inducted: *2004*
Position: Running Back
College: Oklahoma State
Pro Career: 1989-98 Detroit Lions

TSN/ZUMA Press/US Presswire

Joe Schmidt

Not selected until the seventh round of the 1953 NFL Draft because of a series of injuries suffered while attending the University of Pittsburgh, nothing could slow down Joe Schmidt once he joined the Lions. Schmidt proved to be a leader on one of the league's finest defenses and served as the team's field captain for nine straight seasons. And although he didn't create the middle linebacker position (which was an outgrowth of the 4-3 defensive alignment), Schmidt helped define it with his finesse and great anticipation and proved the value of a "defensive quarterback." An all-field tackler with both strength and quickness, Schmidt was voted to the all-league team 10 times. He won two NFL championships with the Lions and grabbed 24 career interceptions, including six during the 1958 season. He also was elected to the Pro Bowl 10 straight years from 1955-64 and four times was named team MVP.

Profile

Born: 1/18/32 in Pittsburgh, PA
Inducted: *1973*
Position: Linebacker
College: Pittsburgh
Pro Career: 1953-65 Detroit Lions

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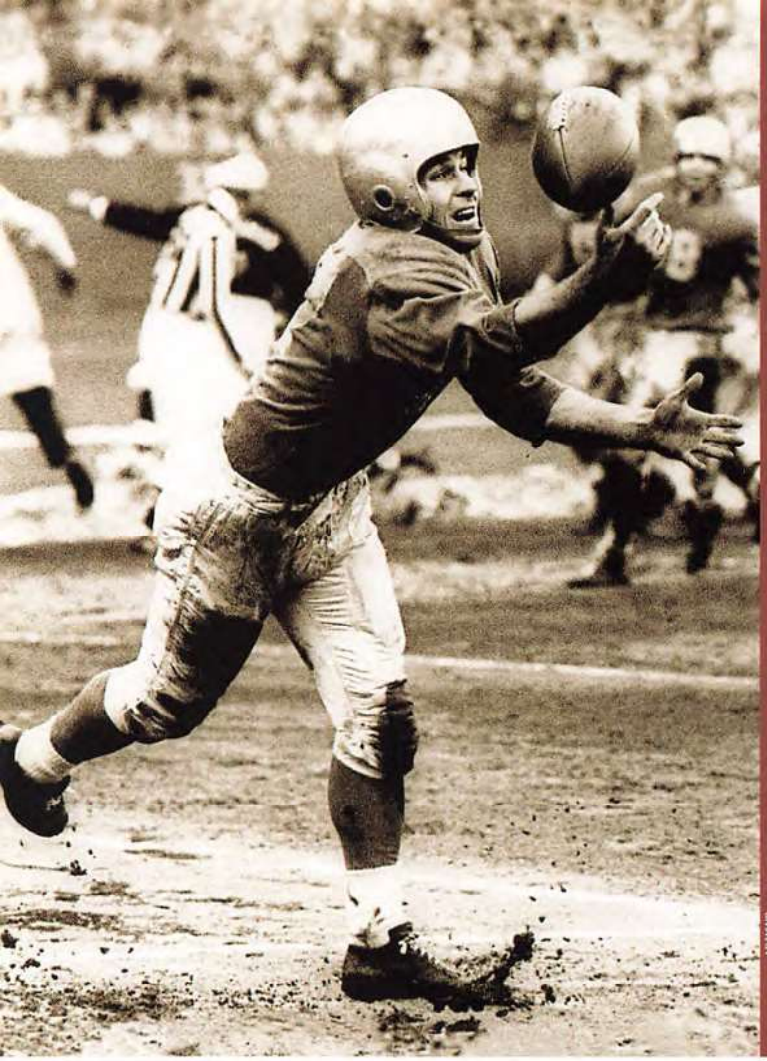

AP/WWP

Doak Walker

Doak Walker, a three-time All-America and the 1948 Heisman Trophy winner at Southern Methodist, set out to prove wrong all those who thought he was too small (5-11, 173 lbs.) to play in the NFL. By the end of his first year with the Lions, he had done just that: the versatile Walker was All-NFL, Rookie of the Year, the league scoring champion (with 128 points), and a Pro Bowl selection. In six pro seasons, Walker was named All-NFL five times and selected to five Pro Bowls. It's no coincidence that during his career the Lions enjoyed their finest era ever, winning three divisional titles and recording NFL championship victories over the Cleveland Browns in 1952 and again in 1953. Walker scored what proved to be the winning touchdown in the 1952 title game and kicked the tie-breaking extra point in the 17-16 championship game victory over the Browns the following season.

Profile

Born: 1/1/27 in Dallas, TX **Died:** 9/27/98
Inducted: ***1986***
Position: Halfback
College: Southern Methodist
Pro Career: 1950-55 Detroit Lions

Courtesy of Pro Football Hall of Fame

Alex Wojciechowicz

Alex Wojciechowicz, who first gained fame in college as a member of Fordham University's "Seven Blocks of Granite" (where he played alongside Vince Lombardi and was a two-time All-America), became an iron-man during his eight-and-a-half year career with the Lions. Popular off the field—but all business when on it—he was Detroit's top pick in the 1938 NFL Draft and won the team's starting center job in his first pro game. Wojciechowicz was also a sure-tackling linebacker who grabbed seven interceptions in the 10-game 1944 season, establishing a team record that would stand for many years. He finished with 19 pickoffs for his career and was a two-time All-Pro selection. Midway through the 1946 season, Wojciechowicz was traded to the Eagles in a move that revitalized his career. He became a defensive catalyst for Philadelphia's NFL championship teams in 1948 and 1949.

Profile

Born: 8/12/15 in South River, NJ **Died:** 7/13/92
Inducted: 1968
Position: Center/Linebacker
College: Fordham
Pro Career: 1938-46 Detroit Lions;
1946-50 Philadelphia Eagles

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AP WWP

Frank Gatski

A center/linebacker, Gatski played in an amazing 11 championship games during his 12-year pro career. He spent his first 11 years with the Cleveland Browns during the time they dominated the All-America Football Conference and then the NFL, before joining the Lions in 1957 and helping Detroit win the league title in his final season. It marked his eighth championship win. Gatski never missed a practice or a game in high school, college (Marshall and Auburn), or the pros. He was a four-time All-NFL selection, played in the 1956 Pro Bowl, *and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1985.*

Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

John Henry Johnson

Johnson was a powerful fullback who played with four teams during a 13-year career that included three seasons with the Lions (1957-59). While he formed part of the "Million Dollar Backfield" in San Francisco from 1954-56 and had his best seasons later on with the Steelers—he posted two 1,000-yard campaigns in Pittsburgh—Johnson won his lone NFL title while playing for Detroit. He keyed the Lions' 1957 title drive, rushing for 621 yards and scoring five times. Johnson, whose college years were spent at St. Mary's and Arizona State, *was a member of the Hall of Fame's Class of 1987.*

Darryl Norenberg/WireImage.com

Ollie Matson

A U.S. Olympic medalist in track in 1952 and a No. 1 NFL Draft selection that same season (by the Chicago Cardinals), Matson's career had stops in four cities, including the Lions in 1963. He was a four-time All-NFL performer and was chosen to six Pro Bowls (MVP of the 1956 contest) from his halfback position. Traded by the Cardinals to the Rams in 1959 for nine players, Matson finished his career with 12,844 net yards and 73 touchdowns, including 40 rushing TDs and 23 touchdown catches. The University of San Francisco graduate *was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1972.*

NFL/WireImage.com

Hugh McElhenny

Most of McElhenny's 13-year career was spent with the 49ers, but he also played with the Vikings, Giants, and finally the Lions in 1964. Nicknamed "The King" because of his electrifying moves, this halfback scored a 40-yard TD on his first pro play and went on to become the 1952 NFL Rookie of the Year. He played in six Pro Bowls and was the game's MVP in 1958. His best season was 1956, when he rushed for 916 yards; in 1963 he won an NFL title with the Giants. The University of Washington grad gained 11,375 combined yards and had 60 career TDs. *McElhenny entered the Hall of Fame in 1970.*

Herb Adderley

Before going on to an accomplished career as a cornerback with the Packers and Cowboys, Adderley was a star offensive player at Michigan State. As a pro, he would play in four of the first six Super Bowls and had a 60-yard interception return for a TD in Green Bay's win over Oakland in Super Bowl II. He was named All-NFL five times, played in five Pro Bowls, and intercepted 48 passes. *Adderley was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1980.*

George Allen

Allen, a legendary coach known for his "win now" approach, was born in Michigan (April 29, 1918 in Detroit), went to Lake Shore HS, and attended three colleges in the state (Alma College, Michigan, and Eastern Michigan). He never had a losing season in 12 years as an NFL head coach and was twice named league Coach of the Year—in 1967 (with the L.A. Rams) and 1971 (with the Redskins). *Allen was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2002.*

Courtesy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame

George Allen

Joe Delamielleure

Delamielleure, one of the top offensive guards of his generation, was born in Detroit on March 16, 1951. He attended St. Clement HS in Center Line and went on to star at Michigan State. He became a first-round selection of the Bills in 1973 and played in 185 consecutive games. Selected All-Pro and All-AFC six times, Delamielleure was chosen to the NFL's 1970s All-Decade Team. *He was part of the Hall of Fame's Class of 2003.*

NFL/WireImage.com

Dan Dierdorf

Dan Dierdorf

A 13-year offensive right tackle with the St. Louis Cardinals, Dierdorf honed his skills at the University of Michigan and was a consensus All-America there in 1970. In the pros, he helped form a line that allowed the fewest sacks in the NFL three times and in the NFC on five occasions. The 1975 Cardinals set a league record, allowing eight sacks in 14 games. A five-time All-Pro who played in six Pro Bowls, *Dierdorf was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1996.*

Len Ford

Ford, a defensive end with the Los Angeles Dons (AAFC), Cleveland Browns, and Green Bay Packers during a career that spanned 1948-58, attended the University of Michigan. He earned All-NFL honors five times, played in four Pro Bowls, and recovered 20 fumbles. A devastating pass rusher, he was part of a Browns' defense that allowed the fewest points in the NFL on six occasions between 1951-57. *Ford was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1976.*

Benny Friedman

Hailed as the NFL's first great passer, Friedman was a University of Michigan product who threw a league-record 11 TD passes as a rookie with the 1927 Cleveland Bulldogs. The following season, playing for the Detroit Wolverines, he led the NFL in both rushing touchdowns and passing TDs, a feat that has never been duplicated. He set another record with 20 TD passes in 1929 as a member of the New York Giants. *Friedman entered the Hall of Fame in 2005.*

Bill Hewitt

Famous for his refusal to wear a helmet (until NFL rules made it mandatory), Hewitt was born October 9, 1909, in Bay City, Michigan. He went to Central HS, attended the University of Michigan, and became the first player named All-NFL with two teams (1933-34, 1936 with the Bears; 1937 with the Eagles). Known for his assortment of trick plays, Hewitt was part of the forward pass-lateral TD that helped Chicago to its 1933 NFL title-game win. *He entered the Hall of Fame in 1971.*

Elroy Hirsch

An All-America halfback at Wisconsin and then Michigan, "Crazylegs" Hirsch started his pro career in 1946 with the Chicago Rockets of the AAFC. He then played with the Los Angeles Rams from 1949-57, becoming part of the team's revolutionary "three-end" offense. Hirsch led the NFL in receiving and scoring in 1951. Named the all-time NFL flanker in 1969, he had 387 catches and scored 60 TDs in his career. *He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1968.*

Paul Krause

The NFL's all-time interception leader at the time of his retirement in 1979, Krause was born February 19, 1942, in Flint, Michigan, and attended Bendle HS. He became the Redskins' No. 2 draft pick in 1964 and that season led the league with 12 interceptions while being named All-Pro. Traded to the Vikings in 1968, he never missed a game for Minnesota and started at free safety in four Super Bowls. Krause, who made 81 interceptions and played in eight Pro Bowls, *was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1998.*

Tom Mack

After a standout career at the University of Michigan, Mack became the second player selected in the 1966 NFL Draft. He spent the next 13 years with the L.A. Rams and never missed a game during his 184-game tenure. With Mack starting at left guard, the Rams enjoyed 12 winning seasons, captured eight division titles, and played in four NFC Championship Games. He was selected to 11 Pro Bowls. *Mack was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1999.*

Detroit Super Bowl

VOLUME ONE

The San Francisco 49ers first struck championship gold in Motown

by Ira Miller

Perhaps it began on the first Sunday of September 1981. The San Francisco 49ers were opening their season against the Detroit Lions at the Silverdome, and they couldn't help but notice the big sign on the wall in one corner of the building.

"Super Bowl 1982," it read.

At the time, the Super Bowl had to be the furthest thing from the minds of the 49ers, who, in their previous three seasons, had won just 10 games and lost 38.

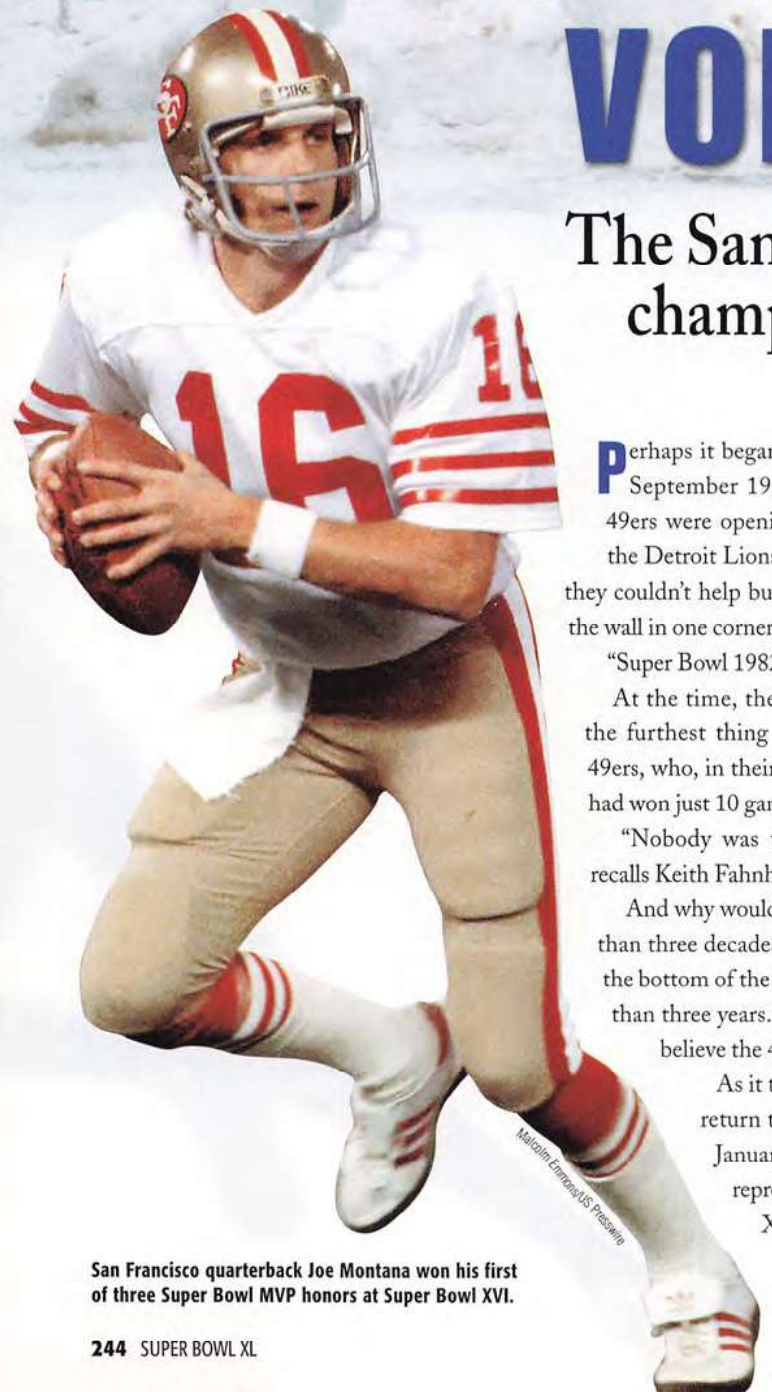
"Nobody was thinking Super Bowl," recalls Keith Fahnhorst, the right tackle.

And why would they? It had been more than three decades since a team rose from the bottom of the NFL to the top in fewer than three years. There was no reason to believe the 49ers would change that.

As it turned out, the 49ers did return to Pontiac the following January, this time as the NFC representative in Super Bowl XVI. On Fahnhorst's first day in the team's Super Bowl headquarters, he awoke to snow piled outside his hotel window. Still, when he walked into the Silverdome for the first time since the season opener, he said, "It's like I'm waiting to wake up from a dream. It doesn't seem like things should have happened this fast."

Some believe the start actually came in the second week of January 1979, when 49ers owner Eddie DeBartolo hired Bill Walsh as the team's head coach. The decision was popular only because Walsh had won favorable reviews during the previous two years while coaching Stanford, but the perception at the time was that DeBartolo was too impulsive to run the franchise properly.

Walsh became the 49ers' fifth head coach in the two years since DeBartolo bought the club. That was notable, too. In the more than three decades before he took over, the 49ers had employed just seven head coaches. Those days were seemingly gone. Little did anyone realize that the hiring of Walsh would usher in an era of stability—and success—unrivaled in NFL history.



Malcolm Emmons/US Presswire

San Francisco quarterback Joe Montana won his first of three Super Bowl MVP honors at Super Bowl XVI.

Al Messerschmidt/WireImage.com

Still others think that if you truly want to pinpoint the origins, then you should look back to New Year's Day 1976 in Cincinnati. That was the day when the legendary Paul Brown retired as Bengals' coach and passed over Walsh as his successor, instead anointing Bill (Tiger) Johnson. Walsh, who had spent eight seasons with the Bengals and was considered Brown's right-hand man—coaching the team's QBs and receivers—never forgot the slight.

Shattered, he left the Bengals' staff shortly afterward, joining the Chargers for one season and then moving on to Stanford.

Yet regardless of when, where, or how it began, it would all converge at Super Bowl XVI—the 49ers, Walsh, and the Bengals—in the first Super Bowl held in a Northern city. This is where the San Francisco 49ers' dynasty took flight.

In the 14 seasons between 1981 and 1994, the 49ers played in five Super Bowls and won them all. Under Walsh and then George Seifert, they won 74 percent of their games during that span. And except for 1982, which was shortened by a strike, they won at least 10 games every season. They had 13 or more victories seven times and reached the NFC Championship Game on nine occasions. They even sent back-to-back starting quarterbacks—Joe Montana and Steve Young—to the Hall of Fame, where Walsh also is enshrined.

How did it happen?

Let's start with the coach. Walsh was a step ahead of his contemporaries, creating an offensive scheme and an overall system of operation that, to varying degrees, has been copied by most teams in the league over the past two decades. From the moment he took over he had a plan, and he was terrific at keeping his finger on the pulse of his team.

When the 49ers reached the ultimate game for that first time, Walsh—knowing his young squad was not accustomed to winning or being in the spotlight and might feel heat even in frigid Detroit—did all he could to turn down the thermostat on the players...and put it squarely on himself.

The entire game plan was completed at home, the week before the 49ers flew to Detroit. Walsh, who arrived ahead of the team because he had been in Washington to accept an award, borrowed a bellman's uniform and met the players' buses at their hotel. In the darkness, hardly anyone recognized him as he fought to take a briefcase out of Joe Montana's hand, a gag that got the week off to a low-pressure start.

When the 49ers were assigned an early practice time, Walsh made a big stink about it, complaining it meant the players were forced to wake up at 4 a.m. West Coast time. This went on for several days, long after they were acclimated to the time change. When wide receiver Freddie Solomon had an injury so minor it barely required treatment, Walsh announced to the world that one of his stars was severely hurt.

It would all converge at Super Bowl XVI—the 49ers, Walsh, and the Bengals—in the first Super Bowl played in a Northern city.

"Yeah, there were some theatrics involved, no question," Walsh says now, laughing. "Thank God we won the game, but it was fun to do that. That's the sort of gamesmanship that doesn't mean a thing to the outcome of the game. Had we lost, it would have been, 'Bill Walsh the clown loses the game.' Instead we won, so it's all folklore."

Players said they saw through Walsh's act but it worked for them anyway. Early in the 1981 season, in the first real inkling of how good the 49ers could be, they manhandled the Dallas Cowboys, 45-14. A year earlier, Dallas had inflicted a 59-14 hurting on them. But when ABC neglected to show clips of the 49ers' win as part of its Monday night halftime highlights package, Walsh railed against the media, accusing the network of not wanting to tarnish the image of "America's Team," the Cowboys.

"It was kind of, 'The world's against us,'" Fahnhorst says. "And even in later years, it was always, 'The media is against us.' It was silly, but we knew that it was his way of motivating us, and it obviously worked for a lot of guys."

Before their triumph in Detroit, the 49ers had a proud history, but a lack of success. Unlike many West Coast teams in major sports that relocated from other cities, the 49ers were a native organization, started in San Francisco in the 1940s in the old All-America Football Conference. They joined the National Football League in 1950, but never had won a title, falling one game shy of the Super Bowl in both 1970 and 1971 when their coach was Dick Nolan, father of current 49ers' mentor Mike Nolan.

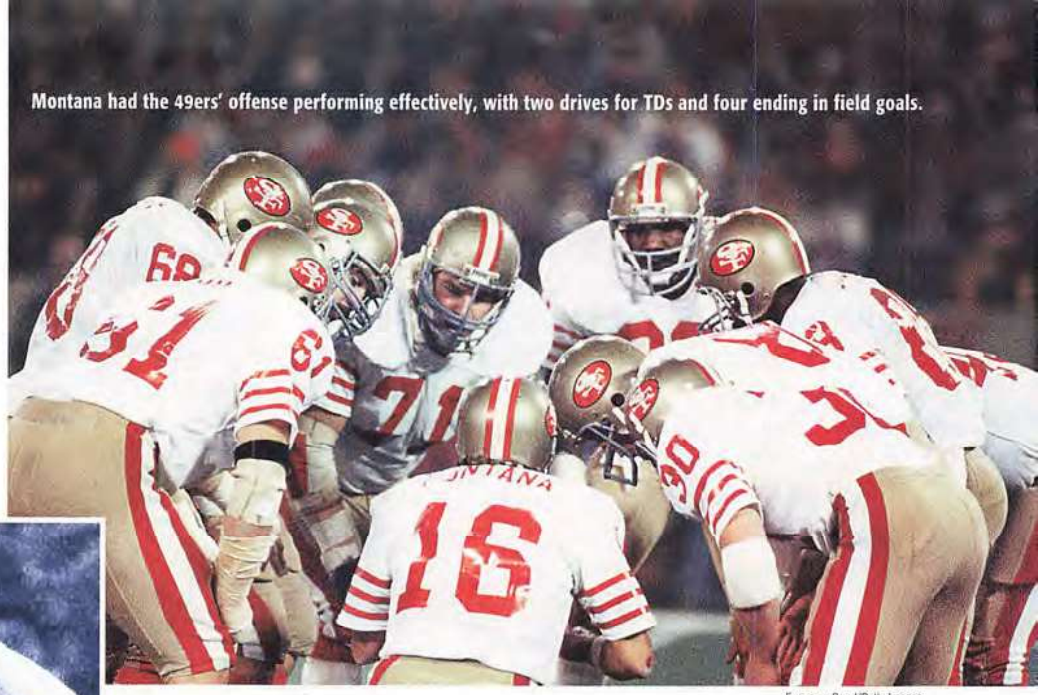
Not much was expected in 1981, either.

In the first four years of DeBartolo's ownership, the team had posted uninspiring marks of 5-9, 2-14, 2-14 again, and 6-10. When they began 1981 by losing two of their first

The 49ers' Earl Cooper is tackled by Ken Riley during Super Bowl XVI. Cooper scored on an 11-yard touchdown reception that gave San Francisco a 14-0 second-quarter lead.

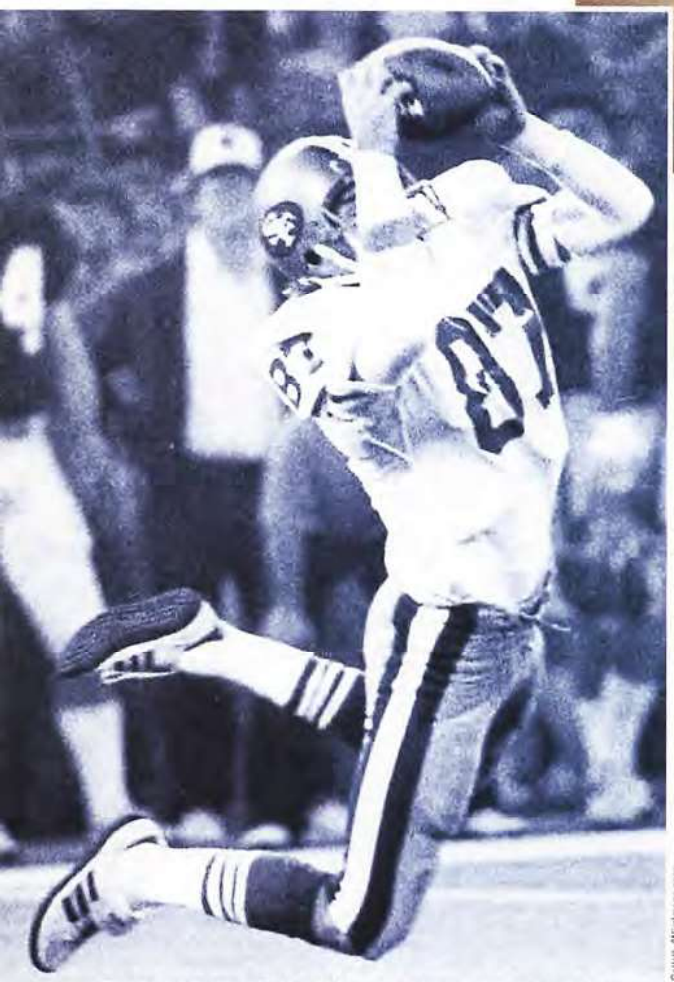
Al Messerschmidt/Wirelmage.com

Walsh's rebuilding began with Montana, but the moves that put the 49ers over the top occurred in quick succession in 1981.



Montana had the 49ers' offense performing effectively, with two drives for TDs and four ending in field goals.

Focus on Sport/Getty Images



The 49ers' Dwight Clark had four receptions in Super Bowl XVI.

George Gellatly/Wirelmage.com

three games—including a 24-17 setback to the Lions in the opener—Fahnhorst, who was looking to negotiate a new contract, told team executive John McVay he wanted to be traded.

"I've mentioned to McVay many times since then, 'Thank God, you didn't listen to [me],'" Fahnhorst says.

Walsh's rebuilding began when he chose Montana in the third round of the 1979 draft, but the moves that put the 49ers over the top occurred in quick succession in 1981. In the draft, Walsh grabbed cornerbacks Ronnie Lott and Eric Wright along with safety Carlton Williamson; all three became immediate starters and eventual Pro Bowl players. To help with all the team's youngsters, the 49ers signed grizzled veteran Jack "Hacksaw" Reynolds, a linebacker who had been released by the archrival L.A. Rams.

Reynolds taught the young 49ers how to work, how to study, how to be professional. He was an eccentric throwback who got his nickname when he cut a car in half in college, but to this day there have been few players who knew how to prepare for a game like he did. Reynolds would be at the 49ers' facility both early in the morning and late at night studying film. He was legendary for piling dozens of sharpened pencils at his desk to take notes in meetings. Lott tells the story of showing up for one meeting without a pencil. He asked Reynolds to borrow one. Reynolds turned the rookie down and told him to get his own. Lott never forgot again.

The final key ingredient was the in-season trade that brought defensive end Fred Dean, one of the NFL's best pass-rushers, up the coast from San Diego. Dean was unusual, but one must remember this was a different era. He was a 232-pound defensive end who chain-smoked in the locker room and who had no interest in lifting weights.

His first game with the 49ers was one of the most significant in franchise history, the big win over the Cowboys. He had seven-and-a-half sacks in his first three games and then dominated the fourth quarter of a narrow victory over the Rams, who had beaten the 49ers in 19 of their 21 previous meetings.

The season became a magical ride, and this young team was soon thrown into the most visible game of all, made possible by Dwight Clark's memorable end zone grab that lifted the 49ers to a thrilling triumph over Dallas for the NFC title (Cincinnati had won the AFC crown by beating San Diego). Magic, however, can have a funny look: their coach was pulling gags, the team's hotel was near a strip mall in what seemed like Siberia, and the weather outside was rotten. Now all they had to do was wait a week for the Super Bowl to be played.

Courtesy cars were provided so players could get some relief from the hotel, but many of them never had driven in snow or ice.

"We must have wrecked half the cars in the parking lot just trying to get out," laughs Fahnhorst.

Their driving adventures, however, paled next to what awaited them on game day. First, it snowed. Then there was the traffic. With the roads already an icy mess from the weather, Vice President George H.W. Bush chose precisely the middle of the pregame rush to bring his motorcade to the Silverdome, stopping traffic in all directions.

Among the vehicles caught in the traffic jam: the 49ers' buses. And remember this was January 1982. There were no cell phones.

"In those days, we couldn't communicate," recalls Walsh, who was on the stuck bus. "How do you know you'll ever move? We were

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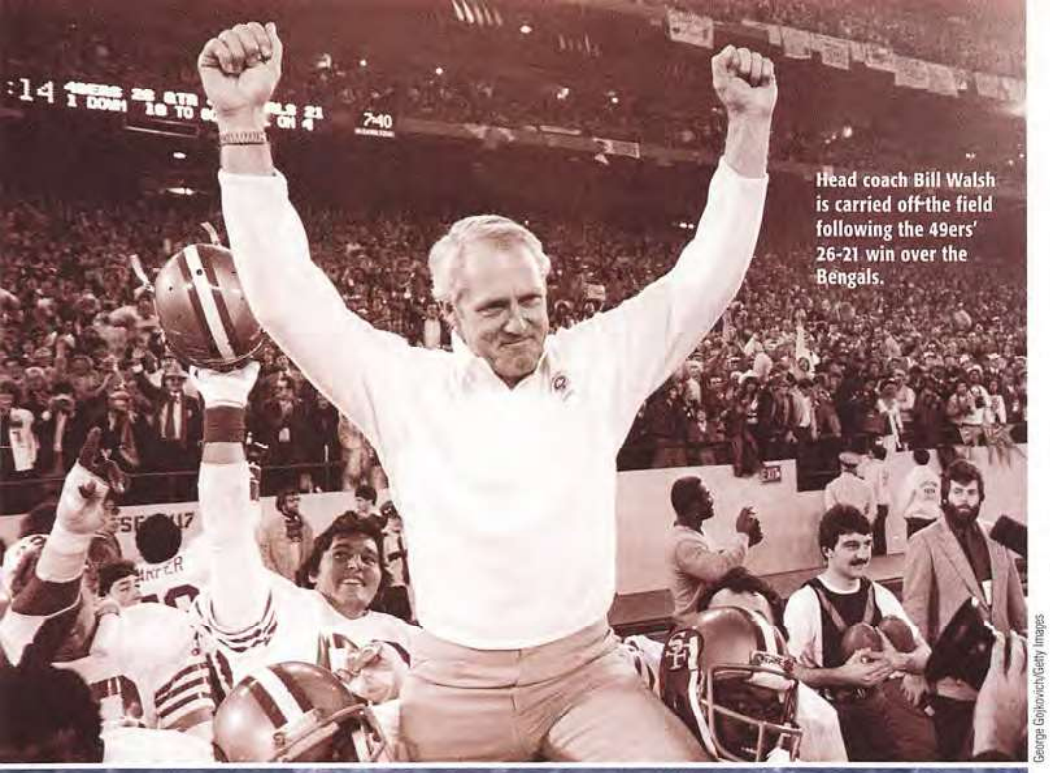

Head coach Bill Walsh is carried off the field following the 49ers' 26-21 win over the Bengals.

George Gojkovich/Getty Images

Ronnie Lott (No. 42) leads the celebration after the 49ers' defense made a goal-line stand in the third quarter.

NFL/Wirelmage.com

gridlocked, so I looked all around and could see up over a hill, the activity and lights, and I figured we'd have to walk over that hill about a mile to get to the stadium. The uncertainty of it was the crazy part."

The supposed 25-minute trip from the hotel took 70 minutes. Fortunately for the 49ers, traffic began to move before they tried to hoof it. Still, the buses carrying the bulk of the team arrived less than a half-hour before they were due on the field for warm-ups. A small contingent of players had left earlier by taxi and stood waiting in the locker room, bewildered by the absence of their teammates.

Walsh—ending the week the same way he began it, with gags—stood up on the stuck bus and announced the 49ers were ahead, 7-0, because wide receiver Freddie Solomon had thrown a touchdown pass to Greg Cosmos, one of the equipment managers.

"When [Walsh] walked into the locker room," recalls Dwight Clark, an early arrival, "he was laughing and joking—acting like we thought we were going to have to go on without him. He wanted to know who was trying to take over."

The circumstances could have unnerved many teams, even ones with more experience.

The circumstances could have unnerved many teams, even ones with more experience. But it didn't even register with the 49ers.

But it didn't even register with the 49ers. They didn't flinch after Amos Lawrence fumbled away the opening kickoff, instead getting the ball right back on an interception. By halftime, they were ahead, 20-0. A late Bengals' TD made the final score a deceivingly close 26-21.

"It's amazing how that stuff did not distract us," says Fahnhorst. "A lot of teams would have freaked out. They'd just think, 'Oh, God, we're doomed.' But Bill was good at turning those distractions into either motivation or into something funny."

Walsh had the ability to keep his team on a remarkably even keel during the season. After that 31-point victory over the Cowboys, the 49ers went on the road and won, 13-3, at Green Bay. Walsh says it was one of his better coaching jobs, because he kept the team focused. The 49ers were victorious in 12 of their final 13 regular-season games, including at one stage three straight three-point victories.

"Our team had excellent leadership," praises Walsh. "And Joe [Montana] solidified everything the way he played the game. We were building up toward being successful the previous two years, conditioning the guys' minds, conditioning them a certain way, and establishing ourselves at having a standard that we worked toward all the time.

"We had an excellent coaching staff, a great attitude among the players, and that youthful enthusiasm. It was a team that really shouldn't have been where we were."

But there they were, writing the first chapter in their historical run of Super Bowl titles. Detroit's place in Super Bowl lore was set. Soon we'll find out what Vol. 2 will bring. ■

Ira Miller spent several years covering the 49ers for the San Francisco Chronicle *and in 1993 received the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Dick McCann Memorial Award for "long and distinguished" coverage of professional football. Miller is also a past president of the Professional Football Writers of America.*

SUPER BOWL RECORDS

GAMES

Most Games
6 – Mike Lodish, Buffalo, XXV-XXVIII; Denver, XXXII-XXXIII

Most Games, Winning Team
5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco, XXIII-XXIV; Dallas, XXVII-XXVIII, XXX

Most Games, Coach
6 – Don Shula, Baltimore, III; Miami, VI-VIII, XVII, XIX

Most Games, Winning Team, Coach
4 – Chuck Noll, Pittsburgh, IX-X, XIII-XIV

SCORING

Most Points, Career
48 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games (8 TD)

Most Points, Game
18 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX (3 TD);
Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV (3 TD); vs. S.D., XXIX (3 TD);
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX (3 TD);
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII (3 TD)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX;
Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII

Most PATs (Kicking), Career
11 – Adam Vinatieri, New England, 4 games

Most PATs (Kicking), Game
7 – Mike Cofer, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; Lin Elliott, Dallas vs. Buffalo, XXVII; Doug Brien, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

Most Field Goals, Career
5 – Ray Wersching, San Francisco, 2 games (5 att)

Most Field Goals, Game
4 – Don Chandler, Green Bay vs. Oakland, II;
Ray Wersching, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XVI

Longest Field Goal
54 – Steve Christie, Buffalo vs. Dallas, XXVIII

RUSHING

Most Attempts, Career
101 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Attempts, Game
38 – John Riggins, Washington vs. Miami, XVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
354 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
204 – Timmy Smith, Washington vs. Denver, XXII

Longest Run From Scrimmage
74 – Marcus Allen, L.A. Raiders vs. Washington, XVIII (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (20 attempts)
9.6 – Marcus Allen, L.A. Raiders, 1 game (20-191)

Highest Average Gain, Game (10 attempts)
10.5 – Tom Matte, Baltimore vs. N.Y. Jets, III (11-116)

Most Touchdowns, Career
5 – Emmitt Smith, Dallas, 3 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII

PASSING

Highest Passer Rating, Career (40 attempts)
127.8– Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Passes Attempted, Career
152 – John Elway, Denver, 5 games

Most Passes Attempted, Game
58 – Jim Kelly, Buffalo vs. Washington, XXVI

Most Passes Completed, Career
83 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Passes Completed, Game
32 – Tom Brady, New England vs. Carolina, XXXVIII

Most Consecutive Completions, Game
13 – Joe Montana, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV

Highest Completion Percentage, Career (40 attempts)
70.0 – Troy Aikman, Dallas, 3 games, (56-80)

Highest Completion Percentage, Game (20 attempts)
88.0 – Phil Simms, N.Y. Giants vs. Denver, XXI (22-25)

Most Yards Gained, Career
1,142– Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
414 – Kurt Warner, St. Louis vs. Tennessee, XXXIV

Longest Pass Completion
85 – Jake Delhomme (to Muhsin Muhammad), Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Most Touchdown Passes, Career
11 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Touchdown Passes, Game
6 – Steve Young, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

RECEIVING

Most Receptions, Career
33 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Receptions, Game
11 – Dan Ross, Cincinnati vs. San Francisco, XVI;
Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII;
Deion Branch, New England vs. Philadelphia, XXXIX

Most Yards Gained, Career
589 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
215 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

Longest Reception
85 – Muhsin Muhammad (from Jake Delhomme), Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Emmitt Smith

Matthew Emmons/US Presswire

Steve Young

Rick Stewart/Getty Images

Highest Average Gain, Career (8 receptions)
24.4 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh, 4 games (11-268)

Highest Average Gain, Game (3 receptions)
40.33– John Stallworth, Pittsburgh vs. Los Angeles, XIV (3-121)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX

KICKOFF RETURNS

Most Kickoff Returns, Career
10 – Ken Bell, Denver, 3 games

Most Kickoff Returns, Game
8 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX
Marcus Knight, Oakland vs. Tampa Bay, XXXVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
283 – Fulton Walker, Miami, 2 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
244 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX

Longest Return
99 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI (TD)

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
42.0 – Tim Dwight, Atlanta, 1 game (5-210)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
47.5 – Fulton Walker, Miami vs. Washington, XVII (4-190)

Most Touchdowns, Game
1 – by seven players, most recently by Jermaine Lewis, Baltimore vs. N.Y. Giants, XXXV

PUNT RETURNS

Most Punt Returns, Career
8 – Troy Brown, New England, 3 games

Most Punt Returns, Game
6 – Mike Nelms, Washington vs. Miami, XVII; Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Most Yards Gained, Career
94 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
90 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Longest Return
45 – John Taylor, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
15.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games (6-94)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
18.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII (3-56)

Most Touchdowns, Game
None

PUNTING

Most Punts, Career
17 – Mike Eischeid, Oakland-Minnesota, 3 games; Mike Horan, Denver-St. Louis, 4 games

Most Punts, Game
11 – Brad Maynard, N.Y. Giants vs. Baltimore, XXXV

Longest Punt
63 – Lee Johnson, Cincinnati vs. San Francisco, XXIII

Highest Average, Punting, Career (10 punts)
46.5 – Jerrel Wilson, Kansas City, 2 games (11-511)

Highest Average, Punting, Game (4 punts)
48.8 – Bryan Wagner, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX (4-195)

INTERCEPTIONS

Most Interceptions By, Career
3 – Chuck Howley, Dallas, 2 games; Rod Martin, Oakland-L.A. Raiders, 2 games; Larry Brown, Dallas, 3 games

Most Interceptions By, Game
3 – Rod Martin, Oakland vs. Philadelphia, XV

Most Yards Gained, Career
108 – Darrien Gordon, San Diego-Denver-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
108 – Darrien Gordon, Denver vs. Atlanta, XXXIII

Longest Return
75 – Willie Brown, Oakland vs. Minnesota, XI (TD)

Most Touchdowns, Game
2 – Dwight Smith, Tampa Bay vs. Oakland, XXXVII

SACKS

Most Sacks, Career
4.5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco-Dallas, 5 games

Most Sacks, Game
3.0 – Reggie White, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

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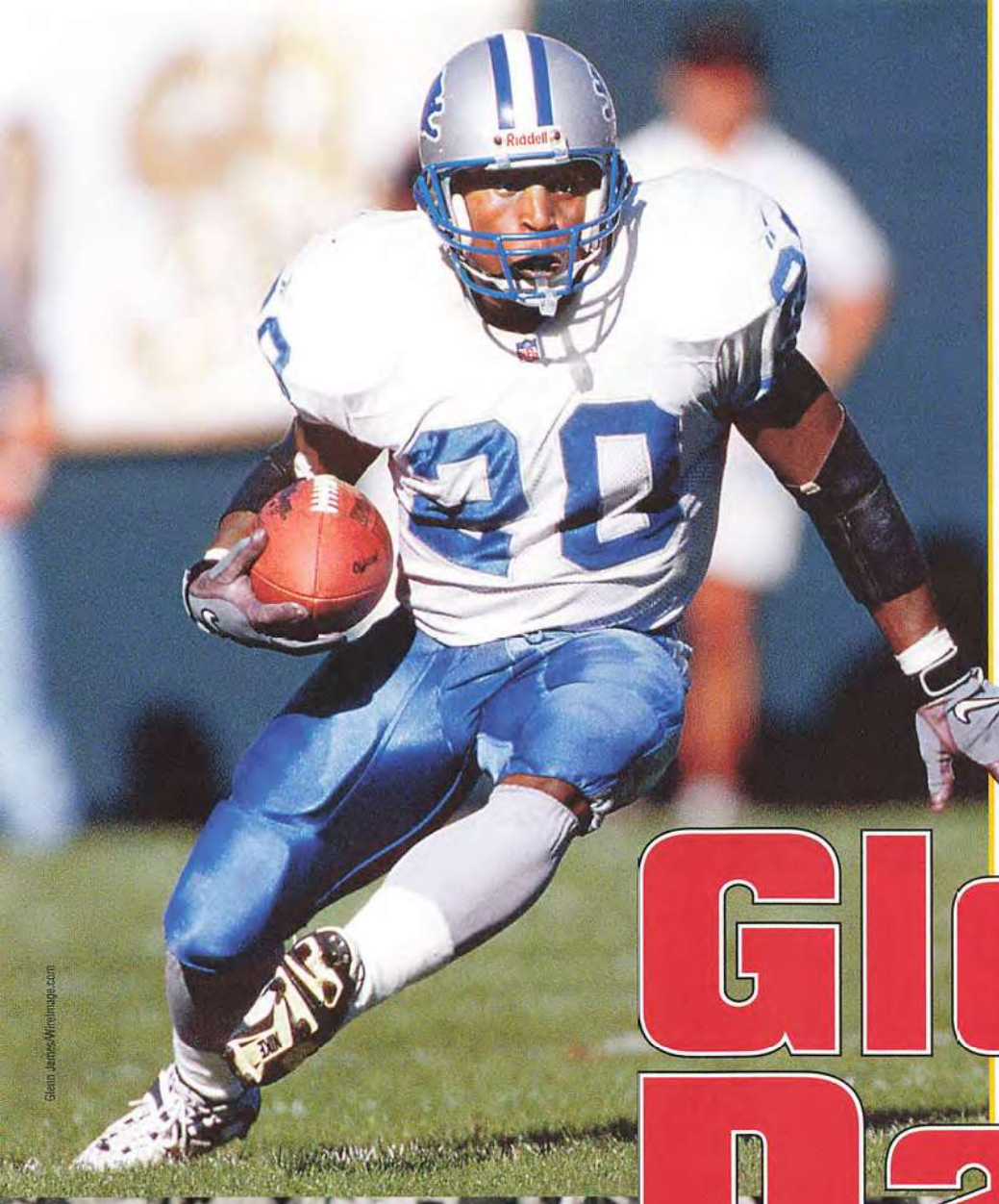

Glenn James/Wirelmage.com

Bettmann/Corbis

For more than 70 years, the Lions have been part of Detroit's proud sports tradition.

In the 1950s, they ruled the den.

Glory Days

by Mike O'Hara

When they were the kings of pro football, the Detroit Lions wore the crown with style and flair.

They were big, bold, and good, and they ruled the sport as though it were their private domain. They collected championships—three during a six-year span in the 1950s—and left in their wake giant footsteps for their successors to try to fill. With a roster stocked with larger-than-life personalities, they worked to weave a mosaic of gridiron greatness.

Both BARRY SANDERS (top) and JOE SCHMIDT played their entire NFL careers with the Lions. Sanders rushed for 1,000 yards in each of his 10 seasons. Schmidt was part of two Lions' title teams in the 1950s and collected 24 career interceptions.

Allen Kee/WireImage.com

Rick Stewart/Getty Images

HERMAN MOORE (left) enjoyed one of the great seasons by any NFL receiver, making 123 catches in 1995. **ERIK KRAMER** quarterbacked the 1991 Lions that won the NFC Central and reached the conference title game.

The legendary names of Bobby Layne, Joe Schmidt, Doak Walker, and others who wore the Lions' traditional Honolulu blue and silver colors rank among the NFL's all-time best at their position.

Before there was a Super Bowl, the Detroit Lions of a half-century ago were super at a time when pro football was coming of age and beginning to strengthen its grip as America's favorite team sport.

The Motor City was still enjoying the glow of a golden age of sports when the Lions were at their peak, and players reveled in their stature as heroes to their hometown fans. With Layne leading the way, they played together on and off the field. The city embraced them, because on any given night, they could reach out and touch their heroes.

And they often did, strengthening the connection between these blue-collar players and this blue-collar town.

"All the guys were damn good football players," says Schmidt, who joined the Lions in 1953 as a rookie linebacker from the University of Pittsburgh. "We enjoyed the game. We weren't necessarily there to make a lot of money. We were using pro football to do other things in life, as a steppingstone to go forward in business or sports.

"We were just making a small amount of money, like anybody else. It wasn't something you'd get rich on. You were doing it because you had a job and you enjoyed playing."

Enjoy playing they did. And they enjoyed winning. With Layne leading comeback victories, the Lions had a saying that Bobby Layne never lost a game. Time just ran out.

"It was a saying he came up with," Schmidt jokes.

The Lions reached four NFL Championship Games from 1952 through 1957 and won three—in 1952, 1953, and 1957. They failed in their bid for a three-peat, which would have been a first since the league adopted a playoff format (a decade later, Green Bay did capture three straight NFL titles). After beating the Browns for the title in back-to-back years, the Lions lost to their archrival in the 1954 championship.

Eight players who were on at least one of the three championship teams are enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Four were part of all three championships—defensive backs Jack Christiansen and Yale Lary, offensive tackle Lou Creekmur, and Layne. Halfback Doak Walker ('52, '53) and Schmidt ('53, '57) won two championships each. Center Frank Gatski and fullback John Henry Johnson were on the '57 team.

While the Lions have failed to add another championship since 1957, they have produced great moments and great players. Cornerback Lem Barney and running back Barry Sanders are Hall of Famers. In 1995, Herman Moore set the NFL's single-season reception record with 123 catches, a mark that held up for seven years until the Colts' Marvin Harrison caught 143 passes. Moore's total still ranks second.

In 1997, Sanders, playing his ninth (and next-to-last) NFL season, rushed for 2,053 yards, just 52 yards shy of the league's single-season mark. He ended the year with a streak of 14 straight 100-yard rushing games. If he hadn't already punched his Hall of Fame ticket before that year, his induction became a foregone conclusion by season's end.

When Sanders was inducted into Canton, he paid tribute to the passion of Detroit's sports fans, who embraced the brilliant athlete from Wichita, Kansas, and Oklahoma State.

"I had the good fortune of being drafted to a wonderful city where people focus their life around work, family, and worship," Sanders said. "I can't think of a better place for me than Detroit. I think about my 10 years there. You don't find better football fans and people who want a winner [more] than in the city of Detroit."

Sanders was part of five playoff teams, including the 1991 Lions that finished 12-4, wrestled the NFC Central crown away from Chicago, and then beat the Dallas Cowboys, 38-6, in a memorable divisional playoff game at the Silverdome. It marked their first postseason win in 34 years, and the rousing cheers from the home crowd still resound with Erik Kramer, the Lions' starting quarterback in that game.

"It was surreal, just walking into the building for the pregame," Kramer says. "Even hours before the game, there seemed to be an electric buzz in that place. It was amazing, really, just from the opening kickoff.

"I don't even know if we had a game plan [that day], other than to get the ball to Barry."

More amazing: The Cowboys set up their defense to stop Sanders, so the Lions threw the ball instead. Kramer passed for 341 yards and three touchdowns against a Dallas defense that never adjusted. Sanders then punctuated the rout with a 41-yard TD run in the fourth quarter.

They would fall the following week in the conference title game, losing, 41-10, to the eventual Super Bowl XXVI champion Redskins,

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but the year and the success that followed through much of the 1990s rekindled memories of their glory days gone by.

That same passion extends throughout Detroit's sports scene. From the Red Wings, who helped create the city's moniker "Hockeytown," to the Pistons, who have won three NBA championships and made the 2005 league finals. And from the Tigers, owners of four World Series titles, to boxing legend Joe Louis, who ruled the heavyweight division for 12 years.

"It's a great sports city," Schmidt says. "I don't remember at all when we were not sold out. Every Sunday, the stadium was jam-packed."

But it was the old Lions who first set that standard for excellence. They relocated from Portsmouth, Ohio, to Detroit in 1934 and their impact on football tradition was immediate. Owner G.A. Richards began the practice of playing on Thanksgiving Day that same year with a game against the Chicago Bears. It since has become an American staple.

In 1935, the Lions won their first NFL championship, beating the defending champion New York Giants, 26-7. That was the year Detroit became known as the City of Champions: the Lions, Tigers, and Red Wings all won league titles.

Less than two decades later, the Lions began a ride through the most glorious era of their 72 seasons in Detroit while playing at old Briggs Stadium, which later was renamed Tiger Stadium.

They had come close in 1951. A 7-4-1 record put them in second place, a half-game behind the Rams in the Western Division and out of the championship game. In 1952, the Lions and Rams finished tied in the Western Division with 9-3 records. The Lions beat the Rams, 31-21, in the divisional playoff and then went on to Cleveland, where they topped the Browns, 17-7, to capture their second NFL championship. Each Lions player collected $2,274 for the victory.

They repeated as champions the following season. A 10-2 record gave the Lions the Western Division title, and they edged the Browns in one of the more memorable title games in NFL history. The rookie Schmidt made his presence felt on the game's second play, knocking the ball loose from Browns quarterback Otto Graham with a crunching hit. The Lions recovered deep in Cleveland territory and drove to their first touchdown, scoring on a run by Doak Walker. But with five minutes remaining in the fourth quarter, the visiting Browns still held a 16-10 lead. It was time for one of Layne's great comebacks.

"He was a great competitor," Schmidt says. "He understood the game. He always had some things in his repertoire of plays he was able to take advantage of when he needed to.

"When he had someone he knew he could beat, I think he'd keep it in his back pocket. He'd use it at a very opportune time. That was his mental attitude toward the game—who he would go to, who would catch the ball."

Layne would need those plays. A third-down pass to Jim Doran kept the drive going. Near the two-minute mark, the Lions called time and Layne consulted on the sideline with head coach Buddy Parker. As the players went back on the field, Doran told Layne he could beat his man.

Layne called the play for his confident receiver and hit him with a 33-yard touchdown pass to tie the score. Walker's extra point made it 17-16. The defense held on the Browns' last possession, and the Lions were champs again.

Although they missed a three-peat, the old Lions gang had one last hurrah in 1957. They finished tied with the 49ers for first place in the Western Division, both teams going 8-4.

In the playoff game in San Francisco, everything went wrong for the Lions in the first half. They trailed, 24-7, and in the locker room they heard the public address announcer telling fans they could buy tickets for next week's championship game against the Browns.

To a man, the Lions felt they could win. And they did. Tom "The Bomb" Tracy scored a touchdown to make it 24-14. Only 89 seconds later, Tracy scored again on a 58-yard run, pulling the Lions within three points. The 49ers managed only a third-quarter field goal. In the fourth quarter, Gene Gedman's touchdown run and a field goal by Jim Martin gave the Lions a 31-27 triumph, one of the most stirring wins in franchise history.

Jeff Kowalsky/AFP/Getty Images

AMERICAN TRADITIONS: Thanksgiving Day football and the Lions have been synonymous since 1934.

"The 49ers sort of played right into our hands," Schmidt says. "With such a lead, they became very conservative and they became anxious. That gave us momentum. Once we started scoring and moving the ball, we gained more confidence."

They reached the NFL Championship Game for the fourth time that decade and beat the Browns, 59-14. It was the topping on a remarkable run of big games, big plays, great players, and three championships.

Schmidt, who would serve as Lions' head coach from 1967-72 (and reach the NFC playoffs in 1970 following a 10-4 season), reflects on those days with a golden glow that time has not diminished.

"We had people with the ability to make big plays, whether it be Bobby Layne throwing a pass or someone in the secondary making an interception," he says. "It was the importance of the team. We had that confidence. At halftime, we knew exactly what we had to do in order to win. That permeated the whole team. It was there.

"Television was just coming into its own. As the TV thing became more and more prevalent, the real fans knew who you were."

And in a real sports town like Detroit, that included just about everybody. ■

Mike O'Hara was born and raised in Detroit and graduated from Wayne State University. He has covered the NFL and the Lions for The Detroit News *on a full-time basis since 1977, following in the footsteps of Jerry Green.*

Detroit Sports: A Long Line of Legends

With bats, skates, fists, golf clubs, legs, and even engines, athletes and teams representing Detroit have linked together a golden chain of championships and accomplishments that have made them famous worldwide.

Combined, Detroit's professional teams have won four World Series championships, 10 Stanley Cups in hockey, four NFL championships, and three titles in the National Basketball Association.

Some of the greatest players in the history of their sport have made it to the Hall of Fame wearing Detroit's uniforms. The Red Wings' Gordie Howe (the incomparable "Mr. Hockey"), Ty Cobb and Al Kaline of the Tigers, the Pistons' Bob Lanier, Dave Bing, and Isiah Thomas, and Lions standouts Barry Sanders, Lem Barney, Joe Schmidt, and Bobby Layne are just a sampling.

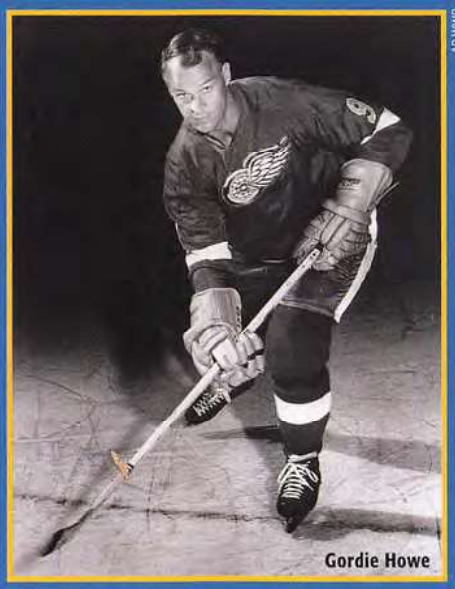
Boxing greats Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, and Thomas Hearns of the famed Kronk Boxing Team all called Detroit home and honed their fistic skills in the city's gyms. The Heisman Trophy bears the names of three University of Michigan football players—Tom Harmon, Desmond Howard, and Charles Woodson. Another Heisman winner, Pete Dawkins of Army, was born and raised in the nearby suburb of Royal Oak.

Baseball's tradition in Detroit is rich and the Tigers were the first of the current pro teams to play in the city. They joined the American League in 1901 and reached the World Series three straight years from 1907-09, then won their first championship by beating the Chicago Cubs in the 1935 World Series. They've since won three more titles—in 1945, 1968, and 1984.

The franchise boasts such historic figures as Cobb, Mickey Cochrane, and Kaline. Denny McLain won 31 games for the 1968 World Series champs. And in 1976, rookie pitcher Mark "The Bird" Fidrych captivated the baseball world with his mound antics and strong right arm. The 1984 champs came sizzling out of the gate with a 35-5 mark, a feat that may never be duplicated.

Pro hockey was next to arrive on the Motor City's sportscape. Detroit's NHL entry played as the Cougars from 1926-30 and as the Falcons from 1930-32, before becoming the Red Wings. They've reached 21 Stanley Cup finals, winning 10 times, and their winged wheel is the NHL's best known insignia in American hockey.

Led by the incomparable Howe, the Babe Ruth of hockey, the Red Wings won four Stanley Cups from 1950-55 and lost in the league finals in 1956. Howe played on the storied Production Line with Sid Abel and Ted Linsday and all three made the Hockey Hall of Fame. The Red Wings' tradition continues, with three more Cups between 1996 and 2002.



AP WWP

Gordie Howe

Bettmann/Corbis

Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling

Last to arrive here were the Pistons, who moved to Detroit from Fort Wayne in 1957. They won their first NBA title in 1989 and repeated in 1990 with a roster that included Thomas, Joe Dumars, Bill Laimbeer, and Vinnie Johnson. Their swashbuckling, rugged style earned them the nickname of The Bad Boys. Dumars, now the Pistons' president, has built a team that won the 2004 NBA crown and reached the 2005 Finals.

In college football, recognition as national champion has gone to Michigan nine times and to Michigan State on three occasions. Michigan State won the NCAA men's basketball title in 1979, when Magic Johnson led the Spartans over Larry Bird's Indiana State squad, and again in 2000. Michigan claimed the 1989 title.

Away from the arena and stadiums, Detroit earned its niche in history in many other sports—boxing, golf, and auto racing among them.

Many observers of the ring place Louis as the best boxer ever. "The Brown Bomber" knocked out James Braddock to win boxing's heavyweight championship and reigned over the division for 12 years until his retirement in 1949. (He did return to the ring in 1951, facing Rocky Marciano.)

Louis' bout with German Max Schmeling in New York 1937 is one of the most memorable sports events of all time. It was a rematch of their brutal 1936 battle, won by Schmeling on a 12th-round knockout.

By the rematch, Hitler's Nazi empire was wreaking destruction on Europe and the bout was seen by many as a symbolic international battle between American freedom and Hitler's despotic regime. U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt even visited Louis in training camp.

Louis won on a first-round KO, pummeling Schmeling savagely to the canvas in a one-sided display of fistic supremacy. People listening to the bout on radio in Louis' old neighborhood in Detroit danced in the streets to celebrate the win.

On the links, the late Horton Smith, former head pro at the Detroit Golf Club, won the first Masters championship in 1934 and added a second green jacket in 1936. The South Course at Oakland Hills in Bloomfield Township has hosted six U.S. Opens, two PGA Championships, two U.S. Senior Opens, the U.S. Amateur, and was the site of the 2004 Ryder Cup.

Oakland Hills earned its nickname of "The Monster" in 1951 when Ben Hogan won the U.S. Open there. After beating the field on the demanding course, a weary but satisfied Hogan declared, "I am glad I brought this course, this monster, to its knees."

A young Arnold Palmer won the 1954 U.S. Amateur at the Country Club of Detroit and has referred to it as the turning point and launching pad of his golf career.

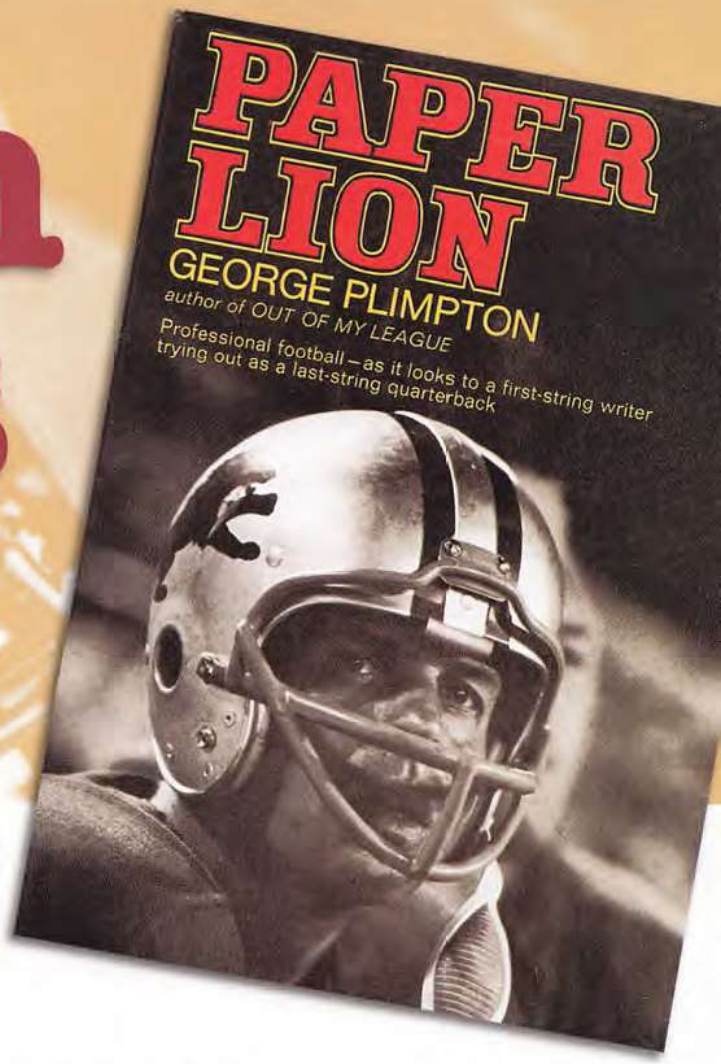
In auto racing, Roger Penske's cars and drivers have run laps around the world to form one of the most successful teams in any sport. Penske Racing has won 247 major races and 18 national championships. No Indy-car team can match their record of 13 Indianapolis 500 wins and 120 victories in Indy-car races.

On this road to glory, Penske has had plenty of company.

—Mike O'Hara

A Lion In His Field.

by John Veneziano


PAPER LION
GEORGE PLIMPTON
author of OUT OF MY LEAGUE
Professional football—as it looks to a first-string writer trying out as a last-string quarterback

Marc Asnin/Corbis

George Plimpton turned journalism inside-out when he suited up for the Lions.

When it came to trying his hand at different sports, he was indeed "Curious George."

He had pucks fired at him as a pro hockey goalie, was beat up for three rounds by a boxing world champion, and spent a month shooting bogeys (and worse) on the PGA tour. But for author George Plimpton, none of those endeavors had the lasting impact as when he wrote about his 1963 "tryout" with the NFL's Detroit Lions.

The concept of "participatory journalism" was a fairly new one when Plimpton—then a reporter for *Sports Illustrated*—convinced the Lions to let him spend four weeks with the team during training camp. Not as a journalist, mind you, but as a player, an experience that led to his best-selling book *Paper Lion: Confessions of a Last String Quarterback*.

1963 DETROIT LIONS ROSTER - TRAINING CAMP

NO.	NAME	POS.	HGT.	WGT.	AGE	YR.IN NFL	COLLEGE
0	Plimpton, George	QB	6-4	192	36	1	Harvard
14	Morrall, Earl	QB	6-2	206	29	8	Michigan S
16	Plum, Milton	QB	6-2	205	28	7	Penn Stat
28	Lary, Yale	DHB	5-11	190	32	10	Texas A &
	[illegible], Nick	FB	6-2	225	26	5	Notre Dam
					28	7	Michigan

Looking back, the story ignited a genre that now overwhelms the American public. Bookstore shelves are filled with personalized tales of people engaging in professions and passions for which they are woefully un—or to be kind, under—qualified, many that then encourage the reader to go out and do the same. Add to that the seemingly never-ending flood of fantasy camps and adventures, reality series, and total access TV programs and you have a world where otherwise ordinary people are now the "stars" of the show.

For all practical purposes, it took root in the August heat at the Cranbrook School, the Lions' preseason home in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. At the time, Plimpton was probably more widely respected than he was widely known. Those in upper-crust literary circles revered him as co-founder of *The Paris Review*, a quarterly magazine that gave voice to aspiring writers and is partly credited with helping discover Jack Kerouac. Yet the undertaking wasn't completely out of character for Plimpton, who had already written the book *Out of My League* about his experience pitching to some of baseball's best hitters before an all-star game at Yankee Stadium (he actually got Willie Mays out on a pop up).

When he arrived in camp, Plimpton kiddingly described himself as a "36-year-old free-agent from Harvard." And, no, he didn't have delusions of unseating incumbent Detroit signal-callers Milt Plum and Earl Morrall. Instead, the 6-4, 192-pounder—who was fittingly assigned No. 0—simply sought to experience life as an NFL player from the inside…and then tell the world about it.

"The key was [head coach] George Wilson when he gave me a playbook," Plimpton told *Detroit News* writer Jerry Green. "If he hadn't given me a playbook, I'd have been standing on the sidelines. It was a brave thing to do."

Lions players embraced Plimpton, both because of his congeniality and the serious way he approached the task. He didn't duck out after practice and go back to a four-star hotel with room service and a private shower. Instead, he became part of the team in every way—the dorms, the cafeteria, the singing of his college fight song—and later told *Time* magazine that the fun wasn't in being on the field, but that "the pleasure

of the research for that book was in listening to [the players] talk intimately about the game they loved."

When it did come to playing, Plimpton insisted his ambition was "not to represent the skilled performer but the average weekend athlete." That was a good thing, since Lions receivers quickly found out his passing range barely covered 20 yards.

"It was just a delight," said offensive guard John Gordy of Plimpton's presence. "I don't know if there's another person who could have done what he did and be accepted the way he was. He helped us through the drudgery and monotony of training camp."

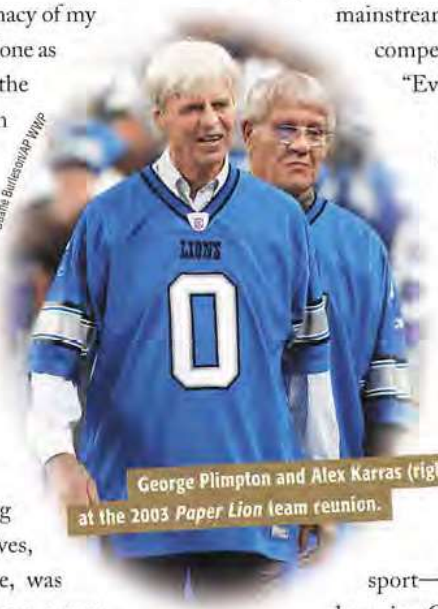
His stint culminated with an appearance in a Lions intra-squad game in front of a paid crowd in Pontiac, Michigan. Accounts of the game have Plimpton losing anywhere from 16 to 33 yards and surviving either three plays or two series. It didn't matter. He had gained a following that lasted the rest of his life. And the crowd—curious as it was—saluted him as he left the field.

"Some of it was, perhaps, appreciation of the lunacy of my participation. But most of it was in relief that I had done as badly as I had," Plimpton contended. "It verified the assumption that the average fan would have about an amateur blundering into the brutal world of professional football. He would get slaughtered."

The book was released in 1966 to rave reviews. Author W.C. Heinz, who had penned both *The Professional* and *Run to Daylight* (the latter with Vince Lombardi), called *Paper Lion* the "best book about football I've ever read." And *The Saturday Review* enthusiastically proclaimed it "the best book written about pro football—maybe about any sport."

It was turned into a hit movie in 1968, starring Alan Alda. Many of the Lions played themselves, though Plimpton, who wanted to do the same, was instead limited to a cameo where he portrayed team owner Bill Ford. "They told me I wasn't funny enough," he lamented.

Forty years after his tryout, Plimpton and more than three dozen of his "teammates" were reunited at Ford Field and honored at halftime of a game against the Vikings. Appreciative cheers rained down for all the players, including Alex Karras, who was making a rare public appearance in Detroit. Yet the loudest ovation was saved for Plimpton, his modern-day Lions jersey adorned with the same "0" he wore in 1963.



Duane Burleson/AP Wide

George Plimpton and Alex Karras (right) at the 2003 *Paper Lion* team reunion.

Bettmann/Corbis

Left to right: Alan Alda, John Gordy, and George Plimpton on the movie set of *Paper Lion*.

The weekend also included a charity dinner and a golf outing. Aging men—some who hadn't seen each other in more than three decades—laughed all over again as they shared memories from that summer. Then, suddenly and sadly, four days later—on September 25, 2003—Plimpton died in his sleep back in his Manhattan apartment. He was 76.

Shortly after Plimpton's death, Lions president and CEO Matt Millen said, "George touched millions of people with his writing and brought both football fans and non-football fans closer to our sport. We will always consider him part of our Detroit Lions family."

Karras captured the sentiments of those closest to Plimpton. "George was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word—loyal, funny, a good friend. He was my hero, and I will miss him."

Tall, awkwardly handsome, and gifted with a grave, hypnotizing voice, Plimpton could have easily passed as a member of British royalty (in fact, his family traced its roots in this country to the arrival of the Mayflower). Yet he connected with—and became embraced by—mainstream America through his ambitious attempts to compete at the highest level of sport. In short, he was "Everyfan."

Along with *Paper Lion* and *Out of My League*, many of these experiences were turned into books. *Open Net* chronicled his efforts in goal for the Boston Bruins while *The Bogey Man* was written after playing several events on the pro golf tour. *Shadow Box* was his account of mixing it up with world lightweight champion Archie Moore (and getting his nose broken). *Mad Ducks & Bears*, a follow-up to *Paper Lion* that focused on the careers of Karras and Gordy, even put Plimpton back on the football field, this time with the Colts.

Plimpton also played tennis—probably his best sport—against Pancho Gonzalez, dueled with chess champion Garry Kasparov, and challenged Oswald Jacoby to a game of bridge. He lost each time. He even made it into a preseason game for the NBA champion Boston Celtics in the late 1960s, where he recorded an assist in addition to a foul. He also tried out as a trapeze artist in a circus and sat in with the New York Philharmonic for its performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 4. Yet with each of his failings—if one chooses to call them that—he became an even bigger success.

Younger sports fans might remember his 1985 *Sports Illustrated* cover story on Sidd Finch, the Plimpton-created baseball phenom who threw a 168-mile-per-hour fastball. Even those unfamiliar with his writings would recognize his face or voice from various TV commercials and documentaries or his roles in the movies *Reds* and *Good Will Hunting*, the network series *ER*, and even an episode of *The Simpsons*.

True to his eternally humble nature, Plimpton never took credit for starting "participatory journalism." He instead claimed inspiration from Paul Gallico, the sports editor of New York's *Daily News* (and later an accomplished author) who in the 1920s wrote about a sparring session with heavyweight boxer Jack Dempsey.

And while that may be the case, George Plimpton was the one who made us feel we were part of the action. All without getting sacked. ■

John Veneziano is the editor of the Official Super Bowl XL Magazine.

Wellington Mara (1916-2005)

New York Giants co-owner and Pro Football Hall of Famer Wellington T. Mara died on October 25, 2005, at the age of 89. Mara was legendary among NFL figures. From the time he became a Giants ballboy at age 9—shortly after his father, Timothy J. Mara, purchased the team—he was a fixture at their practices and games for the next eight decades.

For the league, he was instrumental in the establishment of revenue-sharing of TV money in the 1960s, a selfless decision that allowed the NFL to thrive. That policy continues to this day.

On October 28, in front of a St. Patrick's Cathedral packed with current and former Giants, NFL owners, executives, and other dignitaries, Giants COO John Mara—the oldest of Wellington Mara's 11 children—gave a stirring eulogy. The following are some excerpts:

Larry French/Getty Images

Many years ago, [my father's] good friend Tim Rooney said something to me that I have reflected on many times since. "You realize, don't you, that your father is the best example of how we should all live our lives. You will never find anyone better to emulate." Over the years as I watched my father live his life, I came to realize how true those words were and what a role model he was.

"What can you expect from an Irishman named Wellington, whose father was a bookmaker?" A local sports writer derisively wrote those words about 30 years ago during a time when we were going through some pretty awful seasons. My father usually didn't let criticism from the media affect him very much, but those words stung him in a very personal way. "I'll tell you what you can expect," he said at our kickoff luncheon just a few days later. "You can expect anything he says or writes may be repeated aloud in your own home in front of your own children. You can believe that he was taught to love and respect all mankind, but to fear no man. And you could believe that his abiding ambitions were to pass onto his family the true richness of the inheritance he received from his father, the bookmaker: the knowledge and love and fear of God and, second, to give you [our fans and our coach] a Super Bowl winner."

Next to his faith and his family, the thing my father loved most was his team. His father wanted him to go to law school after his graduation from Fordham in 1937. "Just give me one year with the team," he pleaded. My grandfather agreed and that number turned into 68. He never went to law school; he spent the rest of his life, with the exception of four years that he served in the Navy during World War II, around the team and the sport he loved so much. He attended nearly every practice from minicamp right through the end of the season. It didn't matter if we were 10-2 or 2-10, he was there wearing that old floppy hat, carrying that ridiculous stool, and usually wearing a shirt or a jacket that was almost as old as he was. Each year our equipment manager would give him the new apparel for the season and it would always wind up in the same place, stuck in the back of his closet, and out would come the same old and battered outfits. When we changed our logo several years ago back to the traditional lower case "ny," he actually started wearing some of the shirts that he had worn the last time we had used that logo more than 25 years before. "I knew they would come back," he said.

One of the visions I will always have of him is sitting on the equipment truck prior to Super Bowl XXXV, alone in his thoughts, a scene I had witnessed so many times over the years. No pregame parties or festivities for him; he was where he wanted to be, with his players and coaches, but off to the background so as not to interfere. [During games] he always maintained his composure and often tried—with mixed results—to calm his family down. I remember one game years ago when a particular player was having a tough day and some of us became a little exacerbated. At one point I yelled, "What is he doing out there?" My father put his hand on my shoulder rather firmly and said, "What he's doing is the best that he can."

My father had a special relationship with Giants fans. It amazed me that he answered nearly every letter written to him, no matter how derogatory they got. "They are our customers," he would say. "They're just demonstrating how much they care about the team and they deserve a response." For years it was a joke around our office that if someone wanted their season tickets improved, all they had to do was write my father saying they had some physical ailment that made it difficult to climb the stairs or see from such a distance. The tickets were always improved; the fans knew who the soft touch was.

My father was very proud of his contributions and his long-time associations with the National Football League. He believed so deeply in the principles upon which it was founded and has flourished. He served on virtually every committee and valued all of them. None of those committees mattered more to him than a little-known one called the NFL Alumni Dire Need Fund, which was established to take care of former players who had fallen on hard times.

He may be gone from this world and we certainly grieve over that. But we also rejoice over our good fortune in having had him with us for so long, for the extraordinary life he led, and for his spirit, which will live on in his children and grandchildren for generations to come.

Saddened by Another Loss

On November 15, 2005, Robert Tisch, co-owner of the Giants and a long-time civic leader in New York City, passed away. He was 79.

Tisch, who purchased 50 percent of the team in 1991, was remembered by NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue as "a superb businessman with great integrity and a deep love for his Giants. Both the Giants and the NFL benefited from Bob's financial acumen, consensus-building, and experience as a public servant."

Among the many charitable organizations Tisch founded was *Take the Field*, a nonprofit corporation that has helped raise more than $130 million for renovating and rebuilding public school athletic facilities in New York. ■

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